

THE COLLECTED POETICAL WORKS
OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

VOL. V

STUDIES IN SONG : A CENTURY
OF ROUNDELS : SONNETS ON
ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS :
THE HEPTALOGIA : ETC.

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ROUNDELS, SONNETS ON ENGLISH
DRAMATIC POETS, THE HEPTALOGIA,
ETC.
- VI A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY, ASTROPHEL,
A CHANNEL PASSAGE AND OTHER
POEMS

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

STUDIES IN SONG: A CEN-
TURY OF ROUNDELS:
SONNETS ON ENGLISH
DRAMATIC POETS: THE
HEPTALOGIA: ETC.

By
Algernon Charles Swinburne



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STUDIES IN SONG

SONG FOR THE CENTENARY
OF
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

BORN JANUARY 30TH, 1775

DIED SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1864

SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I

FIVE years beyond an hundred years have seen
Their winters, white as faith's and age's hue,
Melt, smiling through brief tears that broke between,
And hope's young conquering colours reared anew,
Since, on the day whose edge for kings made keen
Smote sharper once than ever storm-wind blew,
A head predestined for the girdling green
That laughs at lightning all the seasons through,
Nor frost or change can sunder
Its crown untouched of thunder,
Leaf from least leaf of all its leaves that grew
Alone for brows too bold
For storm to sear of old,
Elect to shine in time's eternal view,
Rose on the verge of radiant life
Between the winds and sunbeams mingling love with
strife.

2

The darkling day that gave its bloodred birth
To Milton's white republic undefiled
That might endure so few fleet years on earth
Bore in him likewise as divine a child;

8 SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF

But born not less for crowns of love and mirth,
Of palm and myrtle passionate and mild,
The leaf that girds about with gentler girth
The brow steel-bound in battle, and the wild
Soft spray that flowers above
The flower-soft hair of love ;
And the white lips of wayworn winter smiled
And grew serene as spring's
When with stretched clouds like wings
Or wings like drift of snow-clouds massed and
piled
The godlike giant, softening, spread
A shadow of stormy shelter round the new-born
head.

. 3

And o'er it brightening bowed the wild-haired hour,
And touched his tongue with honey and with fire-
And breathed between his lips the note of power
That makes of all the winds of heaven a lyre
Whose strings are stretched from topmost peaks that
tower
To softest springs of waters that suspire,
With sounds too dim to shake the lowliest flower
Breathless with hope and dauntless with desire :
And bright before his face
That Hour became a Grace,
As in the light of their Athenian quire
When the Hours before the sun
And Graces were made one,
Called by sweet Love down from the aerial gyre
By one dear name of natural joy,
To bear on her bright breast from heaven a heaven-
born boy.

4

Ere light could kiss the little lids in sunder
Or love could lift them for the sun to smite,
His fiery birth-star as a sign of wonder
Had risen, perplexing the presageful night
With shadow and glory around her sphere and
under
And portents prophesying by sound and sight ,
And half the sound was song and half was thunder,
And half his life of lightning, half of light :
And in the soft clenched hand
Shone like a burning brand
A shadowy sword for swordless fields of fight,
Wrought only for such lord
As so may wield the sword
That all things ill be put to fear and flight
- Even at the flash and sweep and gleam
Of one swift stroke beheld but in a shuddering
dream.

5

Like the sun's rays that blind the night's wild beasts
The sword of song shines as the swordsman
sings ;
From the west wind's verge even to the arduous
east's
The splendour of the shadow that it flings
Makes fire and storm in heaven above the feasts
Of men fulfilled with food of evil things ;
Strikes dumb the lying and hungering lips of priests,
Smites dead the slaying and ravening hands of
kings ;

Turns dark the lamp's hot light,
 And turns the darkness bright
 As with the shadow of dawn's reverberate wings ;
 And far before its way
 Heaven, yearning toward the day,
 Shines with its thunder and round its lightning
 rings ;
 And never hand yet earlier played
 With that keen sword whose hilt is cloud, and fire
 its blade.

6

As dropping flakes of honey-heavy dew
 More soft than slumber's, fell the first note's
 sound
 From strings the swift young hand strayed lightlier
 through
 Than leaves through calm air wheeling toward the
 ground
 Stray down the drifting wind when skies are blue
 Nor yet the wings of latter winds unbound,
 Ere winter loosen all the Æolian crew
 With storm unleashed behind them like a hound.
 As lightly rose and sank
 Beside a green-flowered bank
 The clear first notes his burning boyhood found
 To sing her sacred praise
 Who rode her city's ways
 Clothed with bright hair and with high purpose
 crowned ;
 A song of soft presageful breath,
 Prefiguring all his love and faith in life and death ;

7

Who should love two things only and only praise
More than all else for ever : even the glory
Of goodly beauty in women, whence all days
Take light whereby death's self seems transitory ;
And loftier love than loveliest eyes can raise,
Love that wipes off the miry stains and gory
From Time's worn feet, besmirched on bloodred
ways,
And lightens with his light the night of story ;
Love that lifts up from dust
Life, and makes darkness just,
And purges as with fire of purgatory
The dense disastrous air,
To burn old falsehood bare
And give the wind its ashes heaped and hoary ;
Love, that with eyes of ageless youth
Sees on the breast of Freedom borne her nursling
Truth.

8

For at his birth the sistering stars were one
That flamed upon it as one fiery star ;
Freedom, whose light makes pale the mounting sun,
And Song, whose fires are quenched when Free-
dom's are.
Of all that love not liberty let none
Love her that fills our lips with fire from far
To mix with winds and seas in unison
And sound athwart life's tideless harbour-bar
Out where our songs fly free
Across time's bounded sea,

A boundless flight beyond the dim sun's car,
 Till all the spheres of night
 Chime concord round their flight
 Too loud for blasts of warring change to mar,
 From stars that sang for Homer's birth
 To these that gave our Landor welcome back from
 earth.

9

Shine, as above his cradle, on his grave,
 Stars of our worship, lights of our desire !
 For never man that heard the world's wind rave
 To you was truer in trust of heart and lyre :
 Nor Greece nor England on a brow more brave
 Beheld your flame against the wind burn higher :
 Nor all the gusts that blanch life's worldly wave
 With surf and surge could quench its flawless fire :
 No blast of all that blow
 Might bid the torch burn low
 That lightens on us yet as o'er his pyre,
 Indomitable of storm,
 That now no flaws deform
 Nor thwart winds baffle ere it all aspire,
 One light of godlike breath and flame,
 To write on heaven with man's most glorious names
 his name.

10

The very dawn was dashed with stormy dew
 And freaked with fire as when God's hand would
 mar
 Palaces reared of tyrants, and the blue
 Deep heaven was kindled round her thunderous car,

That saw how swift a gathering glory grew
About him risen, ere clouds could blind or bar
A splendour strong to burn and burst them through
And mix in one sheer light things near and far.
First flew before his path
Light shafts of love and wrath,
But winged and edged as elder warriors' are ;
Then rose a light that showed
Across the midsea road
From radiant Calpe to revealed Masar
The way of war and love and fate
Between the goals of fear and fortune, hope and hate.

II

Mine own twice banished fathers' harbour-land,
Their nursing-mother France, the well-beloved,
By the arduous blast of sanguine sunrise fanned,
Flamed on him, and his burning lips were moved
As that live statue's throned on Lybian sand
When morning moves it, ere her light faith roved
From promise, and her tyrant's poisonous hand
Fed hope with Corsic honey till she proved
More deadly than despair
And falser even than fair,
Though fairer than all elder hopes removed
As landmarks by the crime
Of inundating time ;
Light faith by grief too loud too long reproved .
For even as in some darkling dance
Wronged love changed hands with hate, and turned
his heart from France.

12

But past the snows and summits Pyrenean
Love stronger-winged held more prevailing flight
That o'er Tyrrhene, Iberian, and Ægean
Shores lightened with one storm of sound and
light.
From earliest even to hoariest years one pæan
Rang rapture through the fluctuant roar of fight,
From Nestor's tongue in accents Achillean
On death's blind verge dominant over night.
For voice as hand and hand
As voice for one fair land
Rose radiant, smote sonorous, past the height
Where darkling pines enrobe
The steel-cold Lake of Gaube,
Deep as dark death and keen as death to smite,
To where on peak or moor or plain
His heart and song and sword were one to strike for
Spain.

13

Resurgent at his lifted voice and hand
Pale in the light of war or treacherous fate
Song bade before him all their shadows stand
For whom his will unbarred their funeral grate.
The father by whose wrong revenged his land
Was given for sword and fire to desolate
Rose fire-encircled as a burning brand,
Great as the woes he wrought and bore were great.
Fair as she smiled and died,
Death's crowned and breathless bride
Smiled as one living even on craft and hate :

And pity, a star unrisen,
Scarce lit Ferrante's prison
Ere night unnatural closed the natural gate
That gave their life and love and light
To those fair eyes despoiled by fratricide of sight.

14

Tears bright and sweet as fire and incense fell
In perfect notes of music-measured pain
On veiled sweet heads that heard not love's farewell
Sob through the song that bade them rise again ;
Rise in the light of living song, to dwell
With memories crowned of memory : so the strain
Made soft as heaven the stream that girdles hell
And sweet the darkness of the breathless plain,
And with Elysian flowers
Recrowned the wreathless hours
That mused and mourned upon their works in vain ;
For all their works of death
Song filled with light and breath,
And listening grief relaxed her lightening chain ;
For sweet as all the wide sweet south
She found the song like honey from the lion's mouth.

15

High from his throne in heaven Simonides,
Crowned with mild aureole of memorial tears
That the everlasting sun of all time sees
All golden, molten from the forge of years,
Smiled, as the gift was laid upon his knees
Of songs that hang like pearls in mourners' ears
Mild as the murmuring of Hymettian bees
And honied as their harvest, that endears

16 SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF

The toil of flowery days ;
 And smiling perfect praise
 Hailed his one brother mateless else of peers :
 Whom we that hear not him
 For length of date grown dim
 Hear, and the heart grows glad of grief that hears ;
 And harshest heights of sorrowing hours,
 Like snows of Alpine April, melt from tears to
 flowers.

16

Therefore to him the shadow of death was none,
 The darkness was not, nor the temporal tomb :
 And multitudinous time for him was one,
 Who bade before his equal seat of doom
 Rise and stand up for judgment in the sun
 The weavers of the world's large-historied loom,
 By their own works of light or darkness done
 Clothed round with light or girt about with gloom.
 In speech of purer gold
 Than even they spake of old
 He bade the breath of Sidney's lips relume
 The fire of thought and love
 That made his bright life move
 Through fair brief seasons of benignant bloom
 To blameless music ever, strong
 As death and sweet as death-annihilating song.

17

Thought gave his wings the width of time to roam,
 Love gave his thought strength equal to release
 From bonds of old forgetful years, like foam
 Vanished, the fame of memories that decrease ;

So strongly faith had fledged for flight from home
The soul's large pinions till her strife should cease
And through the trumpet of a child of Rome
Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece.
As though some northern hand
Reft from the Latin land
A spoil more costly than the Colchian fleece
To clothe with golden sound
Of old joy newly found
And rapture as of penetrating peace
The naked north-wind's cloudiest clime,
And give its darkness light of the old Sicilian time.

18

He saw the brand that fired the towers of Troy
Fade, and the darkness at Ænone's prayer
Close upon her that closed upon her boy,
For all the curse of godhead that she bare ;
And the Apollonian serpent gleam and toy
With scathless maiden limbs and shuddering hair ;
And his love smitten in their dawn of joy
Leave Pan the pine-leaf of her change to wear ;
And one in flowery coils
Caught as in fiery toils
Smite Calydon with mourning unaware ;
And where her low turf shrine
Showed Modesty divine
The fairest mother's daughter far more fair
Hide on her breast the heavenly shame
That kindled once with love should kindle Troy with
flame.

Nor less the light of story than of song
 With graver glories girt his godlike head,
 Reverted alway from the temporal throng
 Of lives that live not toward the living dead.
 The shadows and the splendours of their throng
 Made bright and dark about his board and bed
 The lines of life and vision, sweet or strong
 With sound of lutes or trumpets blown, that led
 Forth of the ghostly gate
 Opening in spite of fate
 Shapes of majestic or tumultuous tread,
 Divine and direful things,
 These foul as priests or kings,
 Those fair as heaven or love or freedom, red
 With blood and green with palms and white
 With raiment woven of deeds divine and words of
 light.

The thunder-fire of Cromwell, and the ray
 That keeps the place of Phocion's name serene
 And clears the cloud from Kosciusko's day,
 Alternate as dark hours with bright between,
 Met in the heaven of his high thought, which lay
 For all stars open that all eyes had seen
 Rise on the night or twilight of the way
 Where feet of human hopes and fears had been.
 Again the sovereign word
 On Milton's lips was heard
 Living : again the tender three days' queen

Drew bright and gentle breath
On the sharp edge of death :
And, staged again to show of mortal scene,
Tiberius, ere his name grew dire,
Wept, stainless yet of empire, tears of blood and fire.

21

Most ardent and most awful and most fond,
The fervour of his Apollonian eye
Yearned upon Hellas, yet enthralled in bond
Of time whose years beheld her and past by
Silent and shameful, till she rose and donned
The casque again of Pallas ; for her cry
Forth of the past and future, depths beyond
This where the present and its tyrants lie,
As one great voice of twain
For him had pealed again,
Heard but of hearts high as her own was high,
High as her own and his
And pure as love's heart is,
That lives though hope at once and memory die
And with her breath his clarion's blast
Was filled as cloud with fire or future souls with past.

22

As a wave only obsequious to the wind
Leaps to the lifting breeze that bids it leap,
Large-hearted, and its thickening mane be thinned
By the strong god's breath moving on the deep
From utmost Atlas even to extremest Ind
That shakes the plain where no men sow nor reap.

So, moved with wrath toward men that ruled and
sinned

And pity toward all tears he saw men weep,

Arose to take man's part

His loving lion heart,

Kind as the sun's that has in charge to keep

Earth and the seed thereof

Safe in his lordly love,

Strong as sheer truth and soft as very sleep ;

The mightiest heart since Milton's leapt,

The gentlest since the gentlest heart of Shakespeare
slept.

23

Like the wind's own on her divided sea

His song arose on Corinth, and aloud

Recalled her Isthmian song and strife when she

Was thronged with glories as with gods in crowd

And as the wind's own spirit her breath was free

And as the heaven's own heart her soul was proud,

But freer and prouder stood no son than he

Of all she bare before her heart was bowed ;

None higher than he who heard

Medea's keen last word

Transpierce her traitor, and like a rushing cloud

That sundering shows a star

Saw pass her thunderous car

And a face whiter and deadlier than a shroud

That lightened from it, and the brand

Of tender blood that falling seared his suppliant hand.

24

More fair than all things born and slain of fate,
More glorious than all births of days and nights.
He bade the spirit of man regenerate,
Rekindling, rise and reassume the rights
That in high seasons of his old estate
Clothed him and armed with majesties and might
Heroic, when the times and hearts were great
And in the depths of ages rose the heights
Radiant of high deeds done
And souls that matched the sun
For splendour with the lightnings of their lights
Whence even their uttered names
Burn like the strong twin flames
Of song that shakes a throne and steel that smites ;
As on Thermopylæ when shone
Leonidas, on Syracuse Timoleon.

25

Or, sweeter than the breathless buds when spring
With smiles and tears and kisses bids them breathe,
Fell with its music from his quiring string
Fragrance of pine-leaves and odorous heath
Twined round the lute whereto he sighed to sing
Of the oak that screened and showed its maid
beneath,
Who seeing her bee crawl back with broken wing
Faded, a fairer flower than all her wreath,
And paler, though her oak
Stood scathless of the stroke
More sharp than edge of axe or wolfish teeth,

That mixed with mortals dead
 Her own half heavenly head
 And life incorporate with a sylvan sheath,
 And left the wild rose and the dove
 A secret place and sacred from all guests but Love.

26

But in the sweet clear fields beyond the river
 Dividing pain from peace and man from shade
 He saw the wings that there no longer quiver
 Sink of the hours whose parting footfalls fade
 On ears which hear the rustling amaranth shiver
 With sweeter sound of wind than ever made
 Music on earth : departing, they deliver
 The soul that shame or wrath or sorrow swayed ;
 And round the king of men
 Clash the clear arms again,
 Clear of all soil and bright as laurel braid,
 That rang less high for joy
 Through the gates fallen of Troy
 Than here to hail the sacrificial maid,
 Iphigeneia, when the ford
 Fast-flowing of sorrows brought her father and their
 lord.

27

And in the clear gulf of the hollow sea
 He saw light glimmering through the grave green
 gloom
 That hardly gave the sun's eye leave to see
 Cymodameia ; but nor tower nor tomb,
 No tower on earth, no tomb of waves may be,
 That may not sometime by diviner doom

Be plain and perview to the poet ; he
Bids time stand back from him and fate make room
For passage of his feet,
Strong as their own are fleet,
And yield the prey no years may reassume
Through all their clamorous track,
Nor night nor day win back
Nor give to darkness what his eyes illumine
And his lips bless for ever : he
Knows what earth knows not, sings truth sung not
Of the sea.

28

Before the sentence of a curule chair
More sacred than the Roman, rose and stood
To take their several doom the imperial pair
Diversely born of Venus, and in mood
Diverse as their one mother, and as fair,
Though like two stars contrasted, and as good,
Though different as dark eyes from golden hair ;
One as that iron planet red like blood
That bears among the stars
Fierce witness of her Mars
In bitter fire by her sweet light subdued ;
One in the gentler skies
Sweet as her amorous eyes :
One proud of worlds and seas and darkness rude
Composed and conquered ; one content
With lightnings from loved eyes of lovers lightly
sent.

And where Alpheus and where Ladon ran
 Radiant, by many a rushy and rippling cove
 More known to glance of god than wandering man,
 He sang the strife of strengths divine that strove,
 Unequal, one with other, for a span,
 Who should be friends for ever in heaven above
 And here on pastoral earth : Arcadian Pan,
 And the awless lord of kings and shepherds, Love :
 All the sweet strife and strange
 With fervid counterchange
 Till one fierce wail through many a glade and grove
 Rang, and its breath made shiver
 The reeds of many a river,
 And the warm airs waxed wintry that it clove,
 Keen-edged as ice-retempered brand ;
 Nor might god's hurt find healing save of godlike
 hand.

As when the jarring gates of thunder ope
 Like earthquake felt in heaven, so dire a cry,
 So fearful and so fierce—" Give the sword scope !"—
 Rang from a daughter's lips, darkening the sky
 To the extreme azure of all its cloudless cope
 With starless horror : nor the God's own eye
 Whose doom bade smite, whose ordinance bade
 hope,
 Might well endure to see the adulteress die,
 The husband-slayer fordone
 By swordstroke of her son,
 Unutterable, unimaginable on high,

On earth abhorrent, fell
Beyond all scourge of hell,
Yet righteous as redemption : Love stood nigh,
Mute, sister-like, and closer clung
Than all fierce forms of threatening coil and madden-
ing tongue.

31

All these things heard and seen and sung of old,
He heard and saw and sang them Once again
Might foot of man tread, eye of man behold
Things un beholden save of ancient men,
Ways save by gods untrodden In his hold
The staff that stayed through some Ætnean glen
The steps of the most highest, most awful-souled
And mightiest-mouthed of singers, even as then
Became a prophet's rod,
A lyre on fire of God,
Being still the staff of exile . yea, as when
The voice poured forth on us
Was even of Æschylus,
And his one word great as the crying of ten,
Crying in men's ears of wrath toward wrong,
Of love toward right immortal, sanctified with song.

32

Him too whom none save one before him ever
Beheld, nor since hath man again beholden,
Whom Dante seeing him saw not, nor the giver
• Of all gifts back to man by time withholden,
Shakespeare—him too, whom sea-like ages sever,
As waves divide men's eyes from lights upholden

To landward, from our songs that find him never,
 Seeking, though memory fire and hope embolden—
 Him too this one song found,
 And raised at its sole sound
 Up from the dust of darkling dreams and olden
 Legends forlorn of breath,
 Up from the deeps of death,
 Ulysses : him whose name turns all songs golden,
 The wise divine strong soul, whom fate
 Could make no less than change and chance beheld
 him great.

33

Nor stands the seer who raised him less august
 Before us, nor in judgment frail and rathe,
 Less constant or less loving or less just,
 But fruitful-ripe and full of tender faith,
 Holding all high and gentle names in trust
 Of time for honour ; so his quickening breath
 Called from the darkness of their martyred dust
 Our sweet Saints Alice and Elizabeth,
 Revived and re-inspired
 With speech from heavenward fired
 By love to say what Love the Archangel saith
 Only, nor may such word
 Save by such ears be heard
 As hear the tongues of angels after death
 Descending on them like a dove
 Has taken all earthly sense of thought away but
 love.

34

All sweet, all sacred, all heroic things,
All generous names and loyal, and all wise,
With all his heart in all its wayfarings
He sought, and worshipped, seeing them with his
eyes
In very present glory, clothed with wings
Of words and deeds and dreams immortal, rise
Visible more than living slaves and kings,
Audible more than actual vows and lies :
These, with scorn's fieriest rod,
These and the Lord their God,
The Lord their likeness, tyrant of the skies
As they Lord Gods of earth,
These with a rage of mirth
He mocked and scourged and spat on, in such wise
That none might stand before his rod,
And these being slain the Spirit alone be lord or
God.

35

For of all souls for all time glorious none
Loved Freedom better, of all who have loved her
best,
Than he who wrote that scripture of the sun
Writ as with fire and light on heaven's own crest,
Of all words heard on earth the noblest one
That ever spake for souls and left them blest :
GLADLY WE SHOULD REST EVER, HAD WE WON
FREEDOM : WE HAVE LOST, AND VERY GLADLY REST.
O poet hero, lord
And father, we record
Deep in the burning tablets of the breast

Thankfully those divine
 And living words of thine
 For faith and comfort in our hearts imprint
 With strokes engraven past hurt of years
 And lines inured with fire of immemorial tears.

36

But who being less than thou shall sing of thee
 Words worthy of more than pity or less than scorn?
 Who sing the golden garland woven of three,
 Thy daughters, Graces mightier than the morn,
 More godlike than the graven gods men see
 Made all but all immortal, human born
 And heavenly natured? With the first came He,
 Led by the living hand, who left forlorn
 Life by his death, and time
 More by his life sublime
 Than by the lives of all whom all men mourn,
 And even for mourning praise
 Heaven, as for all those days
 These dead men's lives clothed round with glories
 worn
 By memory till all time lie dead,
 And higher than all behold the bay round Shake-
 speare's head.

37

Then, fairer than the fairest Grace of ours,
 Came girt with Grecian gold the second Grace,
 And verier daughter of his most perfect hours
 Than any of latter time or alien place
 Named, or with hair inwoven of English flowers
 Only, nor wearing on her statelier face

The lordlier light of Athens. All the Powers
That graced and guarded round that holiest race,
That heavenliest and most high
Time hath seen live and die,
Poured all their power upon him to retrace
The erased immortal roll
Of Love's most sovereign scroll
And Wisdom's warm from Freedom's wide embrace,
The scroll that on Aspasia's knees
Laid once made manifest the Olympian Pericles

38

Clothed on with tenderest weft of Tuscan air,
Came laughing like Etrurian spring the third,
With green Valdelsa's hill-flowers in her hair
Deep-drenched with May-dews, in her voice the
bird
Whose voice hath night and morning in it ; fair
As the ambient gold of wall-flowers that engird
The walls engirdling with a circling stair
My sweet San Gimignano : nor a word
Fell from her flowerlike mouth
Not sweet with all the south ;
As though the dust shrined in Certaldo stirred
And spake, as o'er it shone
That bright Pentameron,
And his own vines again and chestnuts heard
Boccaccio : nor swift Elsa's chime
Mixed not her golden babble with Petrarca's rhyme.

39

No lovelier laughed the garden which receives
 Yet, and yet hides not from our following eyes
 With soft rose-laurels and low strawberry-leaves,
 Ternissa, sweet as April-coloured skies,
 Bowed like a flowering reed when May's wind heaves
 The reed-bed that the stream kisses and sighs,
 In love that shrinks and murmurs and believes
 What yet the wisest of the starriest wise
 Whom Greece might ever hear
 Speaks in the gentlest ear
 That ever heard love's lips philosophize
 With such deep-reasoning words
 As blossoms use and birds,
 Nor heeds Leontion lingering till they rise
 Far off, in no wise over far,
 Beneath a heaven all amorous of its first-born star.

40

What sound, what storm and splendour of what fire,
 Darkening the light of heaven, lightening the night,
 Rings, rages, flashes round what ravening pyre
 That makes time's face pale with its reflex light
 And leaves on earth, who seeing might scarce respire,
 A shadow of red remembrance? Right nor might
 Alternating wore ever shapes more dire
 Nor manifest in all men's awful sight
 In form and face that wore
 Heaven's light and likeness more
 Than these, or held suspense men's hearts at
 height

More fearful, since man first
Slaked with man's blood his thirst,
Than when Rome clashed with Hannibal in fight,
Till tower on ruining tower was hurled
Where Scipio stood, and Carthage was not in the
world.

41

Nor lacked there power of purpose in his hand
Who carved their several praise in words of gold
To bare the brows of conquerors and to brand,
Made shelterless of laurels bought and sold
For price of blood or incense, dust or sand,
Triumph or terror. He that sought of old
His father Ammon in a stranger's land,
And shrank before the serpentining fold,
Stood in our seer's wide eye
No higher than man most high,
And lowest in heart when highest in hope to hold
Fast as a scripture furled
The scroll of all the world
Sealed with his signet : nor the blind and bold
First thief of empire, round whose head
Swarmed carrion flies for bees, on flesh for violets fed.¹

42

As fire that kisses, killing with a kiss,
He saw the light of death, riotous and red,
Flame round the bent brows of Semiramis
Re-risen, and mightier, from the Assyrian dead,

Thy lifelong works, Napoleon, who shall write?
Time, in his children's blood who takes delight.

From the Greek of Landor.

Kindling, as dawn a frost-bound precipice,
 The steely snows of Russia, for the tread
 Of feet that felt before them crawl and hiss
 The snaky lines of blood violently shed
 Like living creeping things
 That writhe but have no stings
 To scare adulterers from the imperial bed
 Bowed with its load of lust,
 Or chill the ravenous gust
 That made her body a fire from heel to head ;
 Or change her high bright spirit and clear,
 For all its mortal stains, from taint of fraud or fear.

43

As light that blesses, hallowing with a look, .
 He saw the godhead in Vittoria's face
 Shine soft on Buonarroti's, till he took,
 Albert himself God, a more godlike grace,
 A strength more heavenly to confront and brook
 All ill things coiled about his worldly race,
 From the bright scripture of that present book
 Wherein his tired grand eyes got power to trace
 Comfort more sweet than youth,
 And hope whose child was truth,
 And love that brought forth sorrow for a space,
 Only that she might bear
 Joy : these things, written there,
 Made even his soul's high heaven a heavenlier
 place,
 Perused with eyes whose glory and glow
 Had in their fires the spirit of Michael Angelo.

44

With balms and dewes of blessing he consoled
 The fair fame wounded by the black priest's fang,
 Giovanna's, and washed off her blithe and bold
 Boy-bridegroom's blood, that seemed so long to
 hang
 On her fair hand, even till the stain of old
 Was cleansed with healing song, that after sang
 Sharp truth by sweetest singers' lips untold
 Of pale Beatrice, though her death-note rang
 From other strings divine
 Ere his rekindling line
 With yet more piteous and intolerant pang
 Pierced all men's hearts anew
 That heard her passion through
 Till fierce from throes of fiery pity sprang
 Wrath, armed for chase of monstrous beasts,
 Strong to lay waste the kingdom of the seed of
 priests

45

He knew the high-souled humbleness, the mirth
 And majesty of meanest men born free,
 That made with Luther's or with Hofer's birth
 The whole world worthier of the sun to see :
 The wealth of spirit among the snows, the dearth
 Wherein souls festered by the servile sea
 That saw the lowest of even crowned heads on earth
 Thronged round with worship in Parthenope
 His hand bade Justice guide
 Her child Tyrannicide,
 Light winged by fire that brings the dawn to be :
 VOL V.

And pierced with Tyrrel's dart
 Again the riotous heart
 That mocked at mercy's tongue and manhood's
 knee :
 And oped the cell where kinglike death
 Hung o'er her brows discrowned who bare Elizabeth.

46

Toward Spenser or toward Bacon proud or kind
 He bared the heart of Essex, twain and one,
 For the base heart that soiled the starry mind
 Stern, for the father in his child undone
 Soft as his own toward children, stamped and signed
 With their sweet image visibly set on
 As by God's hand, clear as his own designed
 The likeness radiant out of ages gone
 That none may now destroy
 Of that high Roman boy
 Whom Julius and Cleopatra saw their son
 True-born of sovereign seed,
 Foredoomed even thence to bleed,
 The stately grace of bright Cæsarion,
 The head unbent, the heart unbowed,
 That not the shadow of death could make less clear
 and proud.

47

With gracious gods he communed, honouring thus
 At once by service and similitude,
 Service devout and worship emulous
 Of the same golden Muses once they wooed,
 The names and shades adored of all of us,
 The nurslings of the brave world's earlier brood,

Grown gods for us themselves · Theocritus
First, and more dear Catullus, names bedewed
 With blessings bright like tears
 From the old memorial years,
And loves and lovely laughs, every mood
 Sweet as the drops that fell
 Of their own cœnomel
From living lips to cheer the multitude
 That feeds on words divine, and grows
More worthy, seeing their world reblossom like a
 rose.

48

Peace, the soft seal of long life's closing story,
 The silent music that no strange note jars,
Crowned not with gentler hand the years that glory
 Crowned, but could hide not all the spiritual scars
Time writes on the inward strengths of warriors
 hoary
With much long warfare, and with gradual bars
Blindly pent in : but these, being transitory,
 Broke, and the power came back that passion
 mars .
 And at the lovely last
 Above all anguish past
Before his own the sightless eyes like stars
 Arose that watched arise
 Like stars in other skies
Above the strife of ships and hurtling cars
 The Dioscurian songs divine
That lighten all the world with lightning of their
 line.

49

He sang the last of Homer, having sung
 The last of his Ulysses Bright and wide
 For him time's dark strait ways, like clouds that
 clung
 About the day-star, doubtful to divide,
 Waxed in his spiritual eyeshot, and his tongue
 Spake as his soul bore witness, that descried,
 Like those twin towering lights in darkness hung,
 Homer, and grey Laertes at his side
 Kingly as kings are none
 Beneath a later sun,
 And the sweet maiden ministering in pride
 To sovereign and to sage
 In their more sweet old age :
 These things he sang, himself as old, and died
 And if death be not, if life be,
 As Homer and as Milton are in heaven is he.

50

Poet whose large-eyed loyalty of love
 Was pure toward all high poets, all their kind
 And all bright words and all sweet works thereof ;
 Strong like the sun, and like the sunlight kind ;
 Heart that no fear but every grief might move
 Wherewith men's hearts were bound of powers
 that bind ;
 The purest soul that ever proof could prove
 From taint of tortuous or of envious mind ;
 Whose eyes elate and clear
 Nor shame nor ever fear
 But only pity or glorious wrath could blind ;

Name set for love apart,
Held lifelong in my heart,
Face like a father's toward my face inclined ;
No gifts like thine are mine to give,
Who by thine own words only bid thee hail, and
live.

NOTES

STANZA

6. See note to the Imaginary Conversation of Leofric and Godiva for the exquisite first verses extant from the hand of Landor
10. The Poems of Walter Savage Landor · 1795 Moral Epistle, respectfully dedicated to Earl Stanhope 1795 Gebir
13. Count Julian Ines de Castro . Ippolito di Este.
- 14, 15. Poems "on the Dead "
- 16 Imaginary Conversations : Lord Brooke and Sir Philip Sidney
- 17, 18. Idyllia Nova Quinque Heroum atque Heroidūm (1815) Corythus, Dryope ; Pan et Pitys ; Coresus et Callirrhoe ; Helena ad Pudoris Aram.
- 19, 20 Imaginary Conversations : Oliver Cromwell and Walter Noble ; Æschines and Phocion, Kosciusko and Poniatowski , Milton and Marvell ; Roger Ascham and Lady Jane Grey , Tiberius and Vipsania
- 21, 22, 23. Hellenics · To Corinth.
- 24 Hellenics : Regeneration
25. The Hamadryad , Acon and Rhodope.
- 26 The Shades of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia.
27. Enallos and Cymodameia.
28. The Children of Venus.
- 29 Cupid and Pan.
- 30 The Death of Clytemnestra ; The Madness of Orestes ; The Prayer of Orestes
32. The Last of Ulysses.
33. Imaginary Conversations: Lady Lisle and Elizabeth Gaunt.
35. *Pro monumento super milites regio jussu interemptos.*

STANZA

- 36 The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare.
37. Pericles and Aspasia.
- 38 The Pentameron.
39. Imaginary Conversations . Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa
- 40 Marcellus and Hannibal P. Scipio Æmilianus, Polybius, and Panætius
- 41 Alexander and Priest of Ammon · Bonaparte and the President of the Senate.
- 42 The Empress Catherine and Princess Dashkoff
- 43 Vittoria Colonna and Michel-Angelo Buonarroti.
- 44 Andrea of Hungary, Giovanna of Naples, Fra Rupert ; a Trilogy Five Scenes (Beatrice Cenci)
45. Luther's Parents The Death of Hofer (*Imaginary Conversations*) Andrew Hofer, Count Metternich, and the Emperor Francis , Judge Wolfgang and Henry of Melchthal · The Coronation · Tyrannicide (*The Last Fruit off an Old Tree*) : Walter Tyrrel and William Rufus Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn.
- 46 Essex and Spenser (*Imaginary Conversations*) : Essex and Bacon Antony and Octavius (*Scenes for the Study*)
- 47 Critical Essays on Theocritus and Catullus.
- 48, 49. Heroic Idyls Homer, Laertes, and Agatha
 "J'en passe, et des meilleurs " But who can enumerate all or half our obligations to the illimitable and inexhaustible genius of the great man whose life and whose labour lasted even from the generation of our fathers' fathers to our own ? Hardly any reader can feel, I think, so deeply as I feel the inadequacy of my poor praise and too imperfect gratitude to the majestic subject of their attempted expression ; but " such as I had have I given him."

GRAND CHORUS OF BIRDS

FROM

ARISTOPHANES

Attempted in English verse after the original metre

I WAS allured into the audacity of this experiment by consideration of a fact which hitherto does not seem to have been taken into consideration by any translator of the half divine humourist in whose incomparable genius the highest qualities of Rabelais were fused and harmonized with the supremest gifts of Shelley: namely, that his marvellous metrical invention of the anapæstic heptameter was almost exactly reproducible in a language to which all variations and combinations of anapæstic, iambic, or trochaic metre are as natural and pliable as all dactylic and spondaic forms of verse are unnatural and abhorrent. As it happens, this highest central interlude of a most adorable masterpiece is as easy to detach from its dramatic setting, and even from its lyrical context, as it was easy to give line for line of it in English. In two metrical points only does my version vary from the verbal pattern of the original. I have of course added rhymes, and double rhymes, as necessary makeweights for the imperfection of an otherwise inadequate language; and equally of course I have not attempted the impossible and undesirable task of reproducing the rare exceptional effect of a line overcharged on purpose with a preponderance of heavy-footed spondees and this for the obvious reason that even if such a line—which I doubt—could be exactly represented, foot by foot and pause for pause, in English, this English line would no more be a verse in any proper sense of the word than is the line I am writing at this moment. And my main intention, or at least my main desire, in the undertaking of this brief adventure, was to renew as far as possible for English ears the music of this resonant and triumphant metre, which goes ringing at full gallop as of horses who

“dance as ’twere to the music
Their own hoofs make”

I would not seem over curious in search of an apt or inapt quotation: but nothing can be fitter than a verse of Shakespeare's to praise at once and to describe the most typical verse of Aristophanes.

THE BIRDS

(685-723)

COME on then, ye dwellers by nature in darkness, and
like to the leaves' generations,
That are little of might, that are moulded of mire,
unenduring and shadowlike nations,
Poor plumeless ephemerals, comfortless mortals, as
visions of creatures fast fleeing,
Lift up your mind unto us that are deathless, and
dateless the date of our being :
Us, children of heaven, us, ageless for aye, us, all of
whose thoughts are eternal ;
That ye may from henceforth, having heard of us all
things aright as to matters supernal,
Of the being of birds and beginning of gods, and of
streams, and the dark beyond reaching,
Truthfully knowing aright, in my name bid Prodicus
pack with his preaching.

It was Chaos and Night at the first, and the black-
ness of darkness, and hell's broad border,
Earth was not, nor air, neither heaven ; when in
depths of the womb of the dark without order
First thing first-born of the black-plumed Night was
a wind-egg hatched in her bosom,
Whence timely with seasons revolving again sweet
Love burst out as a blossom,

Gold wings glittering forth of his back, like whirl-
winds gustily turning.

He, after his wedlock with Chaos, whose wings are
of darkness, in hell broad-burning,

For his nestlings begat him the race of us first, and
upraised us to light new-lighted.

And before this was not the race of the gods, until
all things by Love were united ;

And of kind united with kind in communion of nature
the sky and the sea are

Brought forth, and the earth, and the race of the
gods everlasting and blest. So that we are

Far away the most ancient of all things blest. And
that we are of Love's generation

There are manifest manifold signs. We have wings,
and with us have the Loves habitation ;

And manifold fair young folk that forswore love once,
ere the bloom of them ended,

Have the men that pursued and desired them sub-
dued, by the help of us only befriended,

With such baits as a quail, a flamingo, a goose, or
a cock's comb staring and splendid.*

All best good things that befall men come from us
birds, as is plain to all reason :

For first we proclaim and make known to them
spring, and the winter and autumn in season ;

Bid sow, when the crane starts clanging for Afric, in
shrill-voiced emigrant number,

And calls to the pilot to hang up his rudder again for
the season, and slumber ;

And then weave cloak for Orestes the thief, lest he
strip men of theirs if it freezes.

And again thereafter the kite reappearing announces
a change in the breezes,

And that here is the season for shearing your sheep
of their spring wool. Then does the swallow
Give you notice to sell your greatcoat, and provide
something light for the heat that's to follow.
Thus are we as Ammon or Delphi unto you, Dodona,
nay, Phœbus Apollo.
For, as first ye come all to get auguries of birds, even
such is in all things your carriage,
Be the matter a matter of trade, or of earning your
bread, or of any one's marriage.
And all things ye lay to the charge of a bird that
belong to discerning prediction :
Winged fame is a bird, as you reckon : you sneeze,
and the sign's as a bird for conviction :
All tokens are " birds " with you—sounds too, and
lackeys, and donkeys. Then must it not follow
That we ARE to you all as the manifest godhead that
speaks in prophetic Apollo?

October 19, 1880.

OFF SHORE

WHEN the might of the summer
 Is most on the sea ;
 When the days overcome her
 With joy but to be,
 With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that
 sets her not free,

But for hours upon hours
 As a thrall she remains
 Spell-bound as with flowers
 And content in their chains,
 And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not a lock of
 their deep white manes ;

Then only, far under
 In the depths of her hold,
 Some gleam of its wonder
 Man's eye may behold,
 Its wild-weed forests of crimson and russet and olive
 and gold.

Still deeper and dimmer
 And goodlier they glow
 For the eyes of the swimmer
 Who scans them below
 As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows
 not of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage
And foliage that gleams
As to prisoners in bondage
The light of their dreams,
The desire of a dawn un beholden, with hope on the
wings of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed
Waxen haggard and wizen,
But consoled and illumed
In the depths of their prison
With delight of the light everlasting and vision of
dawn on them risen,

From the banks and the beds
Of the waters divine
They lift up their heads
And the flowers of them shine
Through the splendour of darkness that clothes them
of water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank
Making glorious the gloom,
Soft rank upon rank,
Strange bloom after bloom,
They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk of the
dim sea's womb

Through the subtle and tangible
Gloom without form,
Their branches, infrangible
Ever of storm,
Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the
woodland when April is warm.

And the sound of the quiring
Of all these as one,
Desired and desiring
Till dawn's will be done,
Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as
the heart of the sun.

Till the waves too inherit
And waters take part
In the sense of the spirit
That breathes from his heart, .
And are kindled with music as fire when the lips of
the morning part,

With music unheard
In the light of her lips,
In the life-giving word
Of the dewfall that drips
On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles
the wings of the ships.

White glories of wings
As of seafaring birds
That flock from the springs
Of the sunrise in herds
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at
the change of his words.

At the watchword's change
When the wind's note shifts,
And the skies grow strange,
And the white squall drifts
Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the
low cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word
 Bidding pause, bidding haste,
When the ranks are stirred
 And the lines displaced,
They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan
 green waste.

At the hush of his word
 In a pause of his breath
When the waters have heard
 His will that he saith,
They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for
 division of death.

As a flock by division
 Of death to be thinned,
As the shades in a vision
 Of spirits that sinned ;
So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as
 clouds on the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,
 And the sea burns bright,
And the flight of them past
 Is no more than the flight
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and
 afloat in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers
 In a festival way
When hours after hours
 Shed grace on the day,
White blossomlike butterflies hover and gleam
 through the snows of the spray.

Like snow-coloured petals
Of blossoms that flee
From storm that unsettles
The flower as the tree
They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through
the field of the sea.

Through the furrowless field
Where the foam-blossoms blow
And the secrets are sealed
Of their harvest below
They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or
as blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,
And the God, withdrawn,
Give ear not or hearken
If prayer on him fawn,
And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a
ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather
God, father of song,
Show grace to me, Father
God, loved of me long,
That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in
thee work me not wrong.

While yet I make forward
With face toward thee
Not turned yet in shoreward,
Be thine upon me ;
Be thy light on my forehead or ever I turn it again
from the sea.

As a kiss on my brow
Be the light of thy grace,
Be thy glance on me now
From the pride of thy place :
As the sign of a sire to a son be the light on my face
of thy face.

Thou wast father of olden
Times hailed and adored,
And the sense of thy golden
Great harp's monochord
Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed
thee for master and lord.

Fair father of all
In thy ways that have trod,
That have risen at thy call,
That have thrilled at thy nod,
Arise, shine, lighten upon me, O sun that we see to
be God.

As my soul has been dutiful
Only to thee,
O God most beautiful,
Lighten thou me,
As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids
uplift from the sea.

Be praised and adored of us
All in accord,
Father and lord of us
Alway adored,
The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light
of us all and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,
At the touch of thy rod,
Air quickens to fire
By the foot of thee trod,
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and
visible God.

The years are before thee
As shadows of thee,
As men that adore thee,
As cloudlets that flee :
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven,
and thy shrine is the sea.

AFTER NINE YEARS

TO JOSEPH MAZZINI

Primâ dicte mihi, summâ dicende Camenâ

I

THE shadows fallen of years are nine
Since heaven grew seven times more divine
With thy soul entering, and the dearth
Of souls on earth
Grew sevenfold sadder, wanting One
Whose light of life, quenched here and done,
Burns there eternal as the sun.

2

Beyond all word, beyond all deed,
Beyond all thought beloved, what need
Has death or love that speech should be,
Hast thou of me?
I had no word, no prayer, no cry,
To praise or hail or mourn thee by,
As when thou too wast man as I.

3

Nay, never, nor as any born
Save one whose name priests turn to scorn,
Who haply, though we know not now,
Was man as thou,
A wanderer branded with men's blame,
Loved past man's utterance : yea, the same,
Perchance, and as his name thy name.

4

Thou wast as very Christ—not he
Degraded into Deity,
And priest-polluted by such prayer
As poisons air,
Tongue-worship of the tongue that slays,
False faith and parricidal praise :
But the man crowned with suffering days.

5

God only, being of all mankind
Most manlike, of most equal mind
And heart most perfect, more than can
Be heart of man
Once in ten ages, born to be
As haply Christ was, and as we
Knew surely, seeing, and worshipped thee.

6

To know thee—this at least was ours,
God, clothed upon with human hours,
O face beloved, O spirit adored,
Saviour and lord !

That wast not only for thine own
Redeemer—not of these alone
But all to whom thy word was known.

7

Ten years have wrought their will with me
Since last my words took wing for thee
Who then wast even as now above
Me, and my love.
As then thou knewest not scorn, so now
With that beloved benignant brow
Take these of him whose light wast thou.

FOR A PORTRAIT OF FELICE ORSINI

STEADFAST as sorrow, fiery sad, and sweet
 With underthoughts of love and faith, more ,
 strong
 Than doubt and hate and all ill thoughts which
 throng,
 Haply, round hope's or fear's world-wandering feet
 That find no rest from wandering till they meet
 Death, bearing palms in hand and crowns of song ;
 His face, who thought to vanquish wrong with
 wrong,
 Erring, and make rage and redemption greet,
 Havoc and freedom ; weaving in one web
 Good with his right hand, evil with his left ;
 But all a hero lived and erred and died ;
 Looked thus upon the living world he left
 So bravely that with pity less than pride
 Men hail him Patriot and Tyrannicide.

EVENING ON THE BROADS

OVER two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in
 pèril,
 Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute
 light,
 Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the
 sterile
 Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by
 the night.
 Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the
 breathless
 Twilight : yonder the depths darken afar and
 asleep.
 Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends
 on the deathless
 Waters : hardly the light lives on the face of the
 deep—
 Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the grey soft
 shallow
 Hover the colours and clouds of the twilight, void
 of a star
 As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose
 winglets are callow
 Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her
 brood from afar,

Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies
with their blossom

Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is
encumbered with flowers.

World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth
of her bosom,

Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as
ours

Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dis-
sembles

Still with itself, being sick of division and dimmed
by dismay—

Nay, not so ; but with love and delight beyond
passion it trembles,

Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of
the day :

Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and
begotten

Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of
the grave :

Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not
wholly forgotten,

Only not wholly suppressed by the dark as a wreck
by the wave.

Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon,
in a vision

Blindly beheld, but in vain : ghosts that are tired,
and would rest.

But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense
for division,

Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves
in a nest.

Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season
enkindled

Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair
with the love of them fade :
Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and
dwindled,
Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the
night new-made.
New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasur-
able, endless,
Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,
In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless
love of the friendless
Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of
the sun depart.
Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters
upholden
Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly for ever
asway—
Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile at the
golden
Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.
Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope
to the gleaming
Waste of the water without, waste of the water
within,
Lights overhead and lights underneath seem doubt-
fully dreaming
Whether the day be done, whether the night may
begin.
Far and afar and farther again they falter and hover,
Warm on the water and deep in the sky and pale
on the cloud :
Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to recover
Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the
skirt of the shroud.

Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause of the light
in the westward

Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star
upon star

Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to
the breast-ward

Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the
ways of them are,

Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the
wealth of its wonder,

Fain of the night and the sea and the sweet wan
face of the earth.

Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in
them : under

Things are thrilled in their sleep as with sense of
a sure new birth.

But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on
the sea-line, stranger

Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge
gazed on of me,

Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void
though of danger

Void not of menace, but full of the might of the
dense dull sea.

Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank
deep-drifted ;

Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me in front
is the wave.

As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere is the
girth of it lifted :

But the rampire of water in front is erect as the
wall of a grave.

And the crests of it crumble and topple and change,
but the wall is not broken :

Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my
head,
Moving inland alway again, reared up as in token
Still of impending wrath still in the foam of it shed.
And even in the pauses between them, dividing the
rollers in sunder,
High overhead seems ever the sea-line fixed as a
mark,
And the shore where I stand as a valley beholden of
hills whence thunder
Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening the depths
of the dark.
Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, upward from
under
Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after it here
from the shore :
A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide sky's
wonder
Of colour and cloud, it climbs, or spreads as a
slanted floor.
And the large lights change on the face of the mere
like things that were living,
Winged and wonderful, beams like as birds are
that pass and are free :
But the light is dense as darkness, a gift withheld in
the giving,
That lies as dead on the fierce dull face of the land-
ward sea.
Stained and stifled and soiled, made earthier than
earth is and duller,
Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a thing put
away :
No transparent rapture, a molten music of colour ;
No translucent love taken and given of the day.

Fettered and marred and begrimed is the light's live
self on her falling,

As the light of a man's life lighted the fume of a
dungeon mars :

Only she knows of the wind, when her wrath gives
ear to him calling ;

The delight of the light she knows not, nor answers
the sun or the stars.

Love she hath none to return for the luminous love
of their giving :

None to reflect from the bitter and shallow response
of her heart.

Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself seems dead
and not living,

Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with trouble
that will not depart.

In the sound of her speech to the darkness the moan
of her evil remorse is,

Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the dog-toothed
sea-bank's fang

And trampled to death by the rage of the feet of her
foam-lipped horses

Whose manes are yellow as plague, and as ensigns
of pestilence hang,

That wave in the foul faint air of the breath of a
death-stricken city ;

So menacing heaves she the manes of her rollers
knotted with sand,

Discoloured, opaque, suspended in sign as of strength
without pity,

That shake with flameless thunder the low long
length of the strand.

Here, far off in the farther extreme of the shore as it
lengthens

Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village
begin,
On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of
the strong sea strengthens
Shoreward, thrusting further and further its out-
works in,
Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of her kin
forsaken,
Lay in her golden raiment alone on the wild wave's
edge,
Surely by no shore else, but here on the bank storm-
shaken,
Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of the sun on
the sedge.
Here on a shore unbeheld of his eyes in a dream he
beheld her
Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a far-off
king :
And over the babe-flower gently the head of a pastoral
elder
Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the hawthorn-
blossom in spring,
And kind as harvest in autumn : a shelter of shade
on the lonely
Shelterless unknown shore scourged of implacable
waves :
Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in his
kingdom, and only
Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph that
conquers and craves.
All these waters and wastes are his empire of old,
and awaken
From barren and stagnant slumber at only the
sound of his breath .

Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in his heart,
nor the goal overtaken

That his wide wings yearn for and labour as hearts
that yearn after death.

All the solitude sighs and expects with a blind expectation

Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart, grown
heartsick of strife :

Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and moans,
and the vast ululation

Takes wing with the clouds on the waters, and
wails to be quit of its life.

For the spirit and soul of the waste is the wind, and
his wings with their waving

Darken and lighten the darkness and light of it
thickened or thinned ;

But the heart that impels them is even as a conqueror's
insatiably craving

That victory can fill not, as power cannot satiate
the want of the wind.

All these moorlands and marshes are full of his might,
and oppose not

Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest or precipice piled :

But the will of the wind works ever as his that desires
what he knows not,

And the wail of his want unfulfilled is as one
making moan for her child.

And the cry of his triumph is even as the crying of
hunger that maddens

The heart of a strong man aching in vain as the
wind's heart aches

And the sadness itself of the land for its infinite
solitude saddens

More for the sound than the silence athirst for the
sound that slakes.
And the sunset at last and the twilight are dead :
and the darkness is breathless
With fear of the wind's breath rising that seems
and seems not to sleep :
But a sense of the sound of it alway, a spirit un-
sleeping and deathless,
Ghost or God, evermore moves on the face of the
deep.

THE EMPEROR'S PROGRESS

A STUDY IN THREE STAGES

(On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizj.)

I

A CHILD of brighter than the morning's birth
 And lovelier than all smiles that may be smiled
 Save only of little children undefiled,
 Sweet, perfect, witless of their own dear worth,
 Live rose of love, mute melody of mirth,
 Glad as a bird is when the woods are mild,
 Adorable as is nothing save a child,
 Hails with wide eyes and lips his life on earth,
 His lovely life with all its heaven to be.
 And whoso reads the name inscribed or hears
 Feels his own heart a frozen well of tears,
 Child, for deep dread and fearful pity of thee
 Whom God would not let rather die than see
 The incumbent horror of impending years.

II

Man, that wast godlike being a child, and now,
 No less than kinglike, art no more in sooth
 For all thy grace and lordliness of youth,
 The crown that bids men's branded foreheads bow

Much more has branded and bowed down thy brow
And gnawn upon it as with fire or tooth
Of steel or snake so sorely, that the truth
Seems here to bear false witness. Is it thou,
Child? and is all the summer of all thy spring
This? are the smiles that drew men's kisses down
All faded and transfigured to the frown
That grieves thy face? Art thou this weary thing?
Then is no slave's load heavier than a crown
And such a thrall no bondman as a king.

III

Misery, beyond all men's most miserable,
Absolute, whole, defiant of defence,
Inevitable, inexplicable, intense,
More vast than heaven is high, more deep than hell,
Past cure or charm of solace or of spell,
Possesses and pervades the spirit and sense
Whereto the expanse of the earth pays tribute;
whence
Breeds evil only, and broods on fumes that swell
Rank from the blood of brother and mother and
wife.
"Misery of miseries, all is misery," saith
The heavy fair-faced hateful head, at strife
With its own lusts that burn with feverous breath
Lips which the loathsome bitterness of life
Leaves fearful of the bitterness of death.

THE RESURRECTION OF ALCILIA

(Gratefully inscribed to Dr. A. B. Grosart.)

SWEET song-flower of the Mayspring of our song,
 Be welcome to us, with loving thanks and praise
 To his good hand who travelling on strange ways
 Found thee forlorn and fragrant, lain along
 Beneath dead leaves that many a winter's wrong
 Had rained and heaped through nigh three centuries'
 maze

Above thy Maybloom, hiding from our gaze
 The life that in thy leaves lay sweet and strong.
 For thine have life, while many above thine head
 Piled by the wind lie blossomless and dead.

So now disburdened of such load above
 That lay as death's own dust upon thee shed
 By days too deaf to hear thee like a dove
 Murmuring, we hear thee. bird and flower of love.

THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY

(On the refusal by the French Senate of the plenary amnesty demanded by Victor Hugo, in his speech of July 3rd, for the surviving exiles of the Commune)

THOU shouldst have risen as never dawn yet rose,
 Day of the sunrise of the soul of France,
 Dawn of the whole world's morning, when the
 trance

Of all the world had end, and all its woes

Respite, prophetic of their perfect close.

Light of all tribes of men, all names and clans,

Dawn of the whole world's morning and of man's,

Flower of the heart of morning s mystic rose,

Dawn of the very dawn of very day,

When the sun brighter breaks night's ruinous
 prison,

Thou shouldst have risen as yet no dawn has risen,

Evoked of him whose word puts night away,

Our father, at the music of whose word

Exile had ended, and the world had heard.

July 5, 1880

THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA

Malâ soluta navis exit alite.

. HOR.

Rigged with curses dark

MILTON.

THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA

I

GOLD, and fair marbles, and again more gold,
And space of halls afloat that glance and gleam
Like the green heights of sunset heaven, or seem
The golden steeps of sunrise red and cold
On deserts where dark exile keeps the fold
Fast of the flocks of torment, where no beam
Falls of kind light or comfort save in dream,
These we far off behold not, who behold
The cordage woven of curses, and the decks
With mortal hate and mortal peril paven ;
From stem to stern the lines of doom engraven
That mark for sure inevitable wrecks
Those sails predestinate, though no storm vex,
To miss on earth and find in hell their haven.

II

All curses be about her, and all ill
Go with her ; heaven be dark above her way,
The gulf beneath her glad and sure of prey,
And, wheresoe'er her prow be pointed, still
The winds of heaven have all one evil will
Conspirant even as hearts of kings to slay
With mouths of kings to lie and smile and pray,
And chieftiest his whose wintrier breath makes chill

76 THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA

With more than winter's and more poisonous cold
The horror of his kingdom toward the north,
The deserts of his kingdom toward the east.
And though death hide not in her direful hold
Be all stars adverse toward her that come forth
Nightly, by day all hours till all have ceased :

III

Till all have ceased for ever, and the sum
Be summed of all the sumless curses told
Out on his head by all dark seasons rolled
Over its cursed and crowned existence, dumb
And blind and stark as though the snows made numb
All sense within it, and all conscience cold,
That hangs round hearts of less imperial mould
Like a snake feeding till their doomsday comè.
O heart fast bound of frozen poison, be
All nature's as all true men's hearts to thee,
A two-edged sword of judgment ; hope be far
And fear at hand for pilot oversea
With death for compass and despair for star,
And the white foam a shroud for the White Czar.

September 30, 1880.

SIX YEARS OLD

To H. W. M.

BETWEEN the springs of six and seven,
Two fresh years' fountains, clear
Of all but golden sand for leaven,
Child, midway passing here,
As earth for love's sake dares bless heaven,
So dare I bless you, dear.

BETWEEN two bright well-heads, that brighten
With every breath that blows
Too loud to lull, too low to frighten,
But fain to rock, the rose,
Your feet stand fast, your lit smiles lighten,
That might rear flowers from snows.

You came when winds unleashed were snarling
Behind the frost-bound hours,
A snow-bird sturdier than the starling,
A storm-bird fledged for showers,
That spring might smile to find you, darling,
First born of all the flowers.

Could love make worthy things of worthless,
My song were worth an ear :
Its note should make the days most mirthless
The merriest of the year,
And wake to birth all buds yet birthless
To keep your birthday, dear.

But where your birthday brightens heaven
No need has earth, God knows,
Of light or warmth to melt or leaven
The frost or fog that glows
With sevenfold heavenly lights of seven
Sweet springs that cleave the snows.

Could love make worthy music of you,
And match my Master's powers,
Had even my love less heart to love you,
A better song were ours ;
With all the rhymes like stars above you,
And all the words like flowers.

September 30, 1880.

A PARTING SONG

{To a friend leaving England for a year's residence in Australia.}

THESE winds and suns of spring
 That warm with breath and wing
 The trembling sleep of earth, till half awake
 She laughs and blushes ere her slumber break,
 For all good gifts they bring
 Require one better thing,
 For all the loans of joy they lend us, borrow
 One sharper dole of sorrow,
 To sunder soon by half a world of sea
 Her son from England and my friend from me.

Nor hope nor love nor fear
 May speed or stay one year,
 Nor song nor prayer may bid, as mine would fain,
 The seasons perish and be born again,
 Restoring all we lend,
 Reluctant, of a friend,
 The voice, the hand, the presence and the sight
 That lend their life and light
 To present gladness and heart-strengthening cheer,
 Now lent again for one reluctant year.

So much we lend indeed,
Perforce, by force of need,
So much we must ; even these things and no more
The far sea sundering and the sundered shore,
A world apart from ours,
So much the imperious hours,
Exact, and spare not ; but no more than these
All earth and all her seas
From thought and faith of trust and truth can
borrow,
Not memory from desire, nor hope from sorrow.

Through bright and dark and bright
Returns of day and night
I bid the swift year speed and change and give
His breath of life to make the next year live
With sunnier suns for us
A life more prosperous,
And laugh with flowers more fragrant, that shall see
A merrier March for me,
A rosier-girdled race of night with day,
A goodlier April and a tenderer May.

For him the inverted year
Shall mark our seasons here
With alien alternation, and revive
This withered winter, slaying the spring alive
With darts more sharply drawn
As nearer draws the dawn
In heaven transfigured over earth transformed
And with our winters warmed
And wasted with our summers, till the beams

Till fourfold morning rise
Of starshine on his eyes,
Dawn of the spheres that brand steep heaven across
At height of night with semblance of a cross
Whose grace and ghostly glory
Poured heaven on purgatory,
Seeing with their flamelets risen all heaven grow
glad
For love thereof it had
And lovely joy of loving ; so may these
Make bright with welcome now their southern seas.

O happy stars, whose mirth
The saddest soul on earth
That ever soared and sang found strong to bless,
Lightening his life's harsh load of heaviness
With comfort sown like seed
In dream though not in deed
On sprinkled wastes of darkling thought divine,
Let all your lights now shine
With all as glorious gladness on his eyes
For whom indeed and not in dream they rise.

As those great twins of air
Hailed once with oldworld prayer
Of all folk alway faring forth by sea,
So now may these for grace and guidance be,
To guard his sail and bring
Again to brighten spring
The face we look for and the hand we lack
Still, till they light him back,
As welcome as to first discovering eyes
Their light rose ever, soon on his to rise.

As parting now he goes
From snow-time back to snows,
So back to spring from summer may next year
Restore him, and our hearts receive him here
The best good gift that spring
Had ever grace to bring
At fortune's happiest hour of star-blest birth
Back to love's homebright earth,
To eyes with eyes that commune, hand with hand
And the old warm bosom of all our mother-land.

Earth and sea-wind and sea
And stars and sunlight be
Alike all prosperous for him, and all hours
Have all one heart, and all that heart as ours.
All things as good as strange
Crown all the seasons' change
With changing flower and compensating fruit
From one year's ripening root ;
Till next year bring us, roused at spring's recall,
A heartier flower and goodlier fruit than all.

March 26, 1880

BY THE NORTH SEA

TO WALTER THEODORE WATTS

“We are what suns and winds and waters make us.”—LANDOR.

*SEA, wind, and sun, with light and sound and breath
The spirit of man fulfilling—these create
That joy wherewith man's life grown passionate
Gains heart to hear and sense to read and faith
To know the secret word our Mother saith
In silence, and to see, though doubt wax great,
Death as the shadow cast by life on fate,
Passing, whose shade we call the shadow of death.*

*Brother, to whom our Mother as to me
Is dearer than all dreams of days undone,
This song I give you of the sovereign three
That are as life and sleep and death are, one~
A song the sea-wind gave me from the sea,
Where nought of man's endures before the sun.*

BY THE NORTH SEA

I

I

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin ;
A sea that is stranger than death :
Far fields that a rose never blew in,
Wan waste where the winds lack breath ;
Waste endless and boundless and flowerless
But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free :
Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless
To strive with the sea.

2

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,
Far flutters the weft of the grass
Spun dense over desolate hollows
More pale than the clouds as they pass :
Thick woven as the weft of a witch is
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches
Are waifs on the wind.

3

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,
No pasture or shelter for herds .
The wind is relentless and sleepless,
And restless and songless the birds ;
Their cries from afar fall breathless,
Their wings are as lightnings that flee ;
For the land has two lords that are deathless :
Death's self, and the sea.

4

These twain, as a king with his fellow,
Hold converse of desolate speech :
And her waters are haggard and yellow
And crass with the scurf of the beach :
And his garments are grey as the hoary
Wan sky where the day lies dim ;
And his power is to her, and his glory,
As hers unto him.

5

In the pride of his power she rejoices,
In her glory he glows and is glad :
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,
With his breath she dilates and is mad :
“ If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,
Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee.”
“ Shall I give thee not back if thou give me
O sister, O sea ? ”

6

And year upon year dawns living,
And age upon age drops dead :
And his hand is not weary of giving,
And the thirst of her heart is not fed :
And the hunger that moans in her passion,
And the rage in her hunger that roars,
As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,
Still calls and implores.

7

Her walls have no granite for girder,
No fortalice fronting her stands :
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder
Are less than the banks of her sands :
These number their slain by the thousand ;
For the ship hath no surety to be,
When the bank is abreast of her bows and
Aflush with the sea.

8

No surety to stand, and no shelter
To dawn out of darkness but one,
Out of waters that hurtle and welter
No succour to dawn with the sun.
But a rest from the wind as it passes,
Where, hardly redeemed from the waves
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses
The dead in their graves

9

A multitude noteless of numbers,
As wild weeds cast on an heap :
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,
And softer than song is their sleep ;
And sweeter than all things and stranger
The sense, if perchance it may be,
That the wind is divested of danger
And scatheless the sea.

10

That the roar of the banks they breasted
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,
And the strength of his wings that invested
The wind, as the strength of a bird's ;
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's
That cry to him back if he cries,
As over the graves and their hollows,
Days darken and rise.

11

As the souls of the dead men disburdened
And clean of the sins that they sinned,
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned
And delight as a wave's in the wind,
And delight as the wind's in the billow,
Birds pass, and deride with their glee
The flesh that has dust for its pillow
As wrecks have the sea.

12

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,
Wings flash through the dusk like beams ;
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,
The bird in the graveyard gleams ;
As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,
The graves that the bird's note brightens
Grow bright for the bird.

13

As the waves of the numberless waters
That the wind cannot number who guides
Are the sons of the shore and the daughters
Here lulled by the chime of the tides :
And here in the press of them standing
We know not if these or if we
Live truest, or anchored to landing
Or drifted to sea.

14

In the valley he named of decision
No denser were multitudes met
When the soul of the seer in her vision
Saw nations for doom of them set ;
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendour
Of judgment, the sword and the rod ;
But the doom here of death is more tender
And gentler the god.

15

And gentler the wind from the dreary
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped ;
And sweeter than all that we call so
The seal of their slumber shall be
Till the graves that embosom them also
Be sapped of the sea.

II

For the heart of the waters is cruel,
And the kisses are dire of their lips,
And their waves are as fire is to fuel
To the strength of the sea-faring ships,
Though the sea's eye gleam as a jewel
To the sun's eye back as he dips.

2

Though the sun's eye flash to the sea's
Live light of delight and of laughter,
And her lips breathe back to the breeze
The kiss that the wind's lips waft her
From the sun that subsides, and sees
No gleam of the storm's dawn after.

3

And the wastes of the wild sea-marches
Where the borderers are matched in their might—
Bleak fens that the sun's weight parches,
Dense waves that reject his light—
Change under the change-coloured arches
Of changeless morning and night.

4

The waves are as ranks enrolled
Too close for the storm to sever :
The fens lie naked and cold,
But their heart fails utterly never :
The lists are set from of old,
And the warfare endureth for ever.

III

I

Miles, and miles, and miles of desolation !

Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change !
Sign or token of some eldest nation

Here would make the strange land not so strange.
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,
Seem these borders where the sea-birds range.

2

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder

Grows his heart who journeys here alone.
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

3

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses,
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line
Gleam and glow the sea-coloured marsh-mosses
Salt and splendid from the circling brine
Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

4

Far, and far between, in divers orders,
Clear grey steeples cleave the low grey sky ;
Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,
Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.
These alone in all the wild sea-borders
Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

5

All the land is like as one man's face is,
Pale and troubled still with change of cares.
Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces :
Strength and length of life and peace are theirs ;
Theirs alone amid these weary places,
Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

6

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes
Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,
Stern and sweet, above the sand-hill ranges
Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned
Once, now calm as earth whose only change is
Wind, and light, and wind, and cloud, and wind.

7

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,
In and out and in the wild way strives,
Starred and paved and lined with flowers that
squander
Gold as golden as the gold of hives,
Salt and moist and multiform : but yonder
See. what sign of life or death survives?

8

Seen then only when the songs of olden
Harps were young whose echoes yet endure,
Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,
Known of only when the world was pure,
Here is Hades, manifest, beholden,
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure !

9

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering
Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,
None can tell, who fares here forward wondering ,
None may doubt but here might end his quest.
Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering
Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

10

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted
Guest of many a lord of many a land
Saw the shape or shade of years departed,
Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,
Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,
Anticleia, like a statue stand.

11

Statue? nay, nor tissued image woven
Fair on hangings in his father's hall ,
Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,
Far too firm her loveliest love of all ;
Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,
Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

12

Love that lives and stands up re-created
Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled ;
Love more strong than death or all things fated,
Child's and mother's, lit by love and led ,
Love that found what life so long awaited
Here, when life came down among the dead.

13

Here, where never came alive another,
Came her son across the sundering tide
Crossed before by many a warrior brother
Once that warred on Ilion at his side ;
Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother
Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.

14

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,
Clasp he might not, only might implore,
Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,
Son, and mother from the son she bore—
Here? But all dispeopled here of visions
Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

15

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is,
All too fain they lived of light to see,
Once to see the darkness of these beaches,
Once to sing this Hades found of me
Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,
Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

IV

1

But aloft and afront of me faring
Far forward as folk in a dream
That strive, between doubting and daring,
Right on till the goal for them gleam,
Full forth till their goal on them lighten,
The harbour where fain they would be,
What headlands there darken and brighten?
What change in the sea?

2

What houses and woodlands that nestle
Safe inland to lee of the hill
As it slopes from the headlands that wrestle
And succumb to the strong sea's will?
Truce is not, nor respite, nor pity,
For the battle is waged not of hands
Where over the grave of a city
The ghost of it stands.

3

Where the wings of the sea-wind slacken,
Green lawns to the landward thrive,
Fields brighten and pine-woods blacken,
And the heat in their heart is alive;

BY THE NORTH SEA

They blossom and warble and murmur,
For the sense of their spirit is free :
But harder to shoreward and firmer
The grasp of the sea.

4

Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,
The banks drop down into dust,
The heights of the hills are made humble,
As a reed's is the strength of their trust :
As a city's that armies environ,
The strength of their stay is of sand :
But the grasp of the sea is as iron,
Laid hard on the land.

5

A land that is thirstier than ruin ;
A sea that is hungrier than death ;
Heaped hills that a tree never grew in,
Wide sands where the wave draws breath ;
All solace is here for the spirit
That ever for ever may be
For the soul of thy son to inherit,
My mother, my sea.

6

O delight of the headlands and beaches !
O desire of the wind on the wold,
More glad than a man's when it reaches

And the palm of possession is dreary
To the sense that in search of it sinned ;
But nor satisfied ever nor weary
Is ever the wind.

7

The delight that he takes but in living
Is more than of all things that live :
For the world that has all things for giving
Has nothing so goodly to give :
But more than delight his desire is,
For the goal where his pinions would be
Is immortal as air or as fire is,
Immense as the sea

8

Though hence come the moan that he borrows
From darkness and depth of the night,
Though hence be the spring of his sorrows,
Hence too is the joy of his might ,
The delight that his doom is for ever
To seek and desire and rejoice,
And the sense that eternity never
Shall silence his voice.

9

That satiety never may stifle
Nor weariness ever estrange
Nor time be so strong as to rifle
Nor change be so great as to change

His gift that renews in the giving,
The joy that exalts him to be
Alone of all elements living
The lord of the sea.

10

What is fire, that its flame should consume her?
More fierce than all fires are her waves :
What is earth, that its gulfs should entomb her?
More deep are her own than their graves.
Life shrinks from his pinions that cover
The darkness by thunders bedinned :
But she knows him, her lord and her lover
The godhead of wind.

11

For a season his wings are about her,
His breath on her lips for a space ;
Such rapture he wins not without her
In the width of his worldwide race.
Though the forests bow down, and the mountains
Wax dark, and the tribes of them flee,
His delight is more deep in the fountains
And springs of the sea.

12

There are those too of mortals that love him,
There are souls that desire and require,
Be the glories of midnight above him
Or beneath him the daysprings of fire :
And their hearts are as harps that approve him
And praise him as chords of a lyre

That were fain with their music to move him
To meet their desire

13

To descend through the darkness to grace them,
Till darkness were lovelier than light :
To encompass and grasp and embrace them,
Till their weakness were one with his might .
With the strength of his wings to caress them,
With the blast of his breath to set free ,
With the mouths of his thunders to bless them
For sons of the sea

14

For these have the toil and the guerdon
That the wind has eternally · these
Have part in the boon and the burden
Of the sleepless unsatisfied breeze,
That finds not, but seeking rejoices
That possession can work him no wrong :
And the voice at the heart of their voice is
The sense of his song.

15

For the wind's is their doom and their blessing ;
To desire, and have always above
A possession beyond their possessing,
A love beyond reach of their love.
Green earth has her sons and her daughters,
And these have their guerdons ; but we
Are the wind's and the sun's and the water's,
Elect of the sea.

V

I

For the sea too seeks and rejoices,
Gains and loses and gains,
And the joy of her heart's own choice is
As ours, and as ours are her pains :
As the thoughts of our hearts are her voices,
And as hers is the pulse of our veins

2

Her fields that know not of dearth
Nor lie for their fruit's sake fallow
Laugh large in the depth of their mirth :
But inshore here in the shallow,
Embroidered with encumbrance of earth,
Their skirts are turbid and yellow

3

The grime of her greed is upon her,
The sign of her deed is her soil ;
As the earth's is her own dishonour,
And corruption the crown of her toil .
She hath spoiled and devoured, and her honour
Is this, to be shamed by her spoil.

4

But afar where pollution is none,
Nor ensign of strife nor endeavour,
Where her heart and the sun's are one,
And the soil of her sin comes never,
She is pure as the wind and the sun,
And her sweetness endureth for ever.

VI

1

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath ;
These, above the washing tides and wasting,
Reign, and rule this land of utter death

2

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,
Very death of very death, begun
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unhidden,
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

3

Change of change, and death of death begotten,
Darkness born of darkness, one and three,
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.

4

Lo, thy likeness of thy desolation,
Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,
Formless form, incarnate miscreation,
Served of all things living and abhorred ;
Earth herself is here thine incarnation,
Time, of all things born on earth adored

5

All that worship thee are fearful of thee ;
No man may not worship thee for fear :
Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,
Move nor change thee with our change of cheer :
All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,
God, the sceptre of whose throne is here

6

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,
Here the palace paven for thy feet ;
Here thy sign from nation unto nation
Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,
Guards that go before thine exaltation,
Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

7

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm.
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

8

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

9

Ah, less mighty, less than Time prevailing,
Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,
Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,
Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.
"Where is man?" the cloister murmurs wailing;
Back the mute shrine thunders—"Where is God?"

10

Here is all the end of all his glory—
Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.
Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story:
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

11

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
Dust from dust as years relapse along;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

12

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,
Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,
These poor dead that sleeping here awaited
Long the archangel's re-creating word,
Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated
Till the blast of judgment should be heard,

13

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,
Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,
Desolate beyond man's desolation,
Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.

14

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,
Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,
Crumble, from their constant place detruded,
That the sea devours and gives not thanks.
Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded
Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks

15

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,
They that thought for all time through to be
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth, and man, and all their gods wax humble
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

VII

I

But afar on the headland exalted,
But beyond in the curl of the bay,
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted
Our father is lord of the day.
Our father and lord that we follow,
For deathless and ageless is he ;
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,
His sandal the sea.

2

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,
And her green floor glitters with fire,
The sea has the sun for a harper,
The sun has the sea for a lyre.
The waves are a pavement of amber,
By the feet of the sea-winds trod
To receive in a god's presence-chamber
Our father, the God.

3

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,
Is master and God of the land :
But the air is fulfilled of the glory
That is shed from our lord's right hand.

O father of all of us ever,
All glory be only to thee
From heaven, that is void of thee never,
And earth, and the sea.

4

O Sun, whereof all is beholden,
Behold now the shadow of this death,
This place of the sepulchres, olden
And emptied and vain as a breath.
The bloom of the bountiful heather
Laughs broadly beyond in thy light
As dawn, with her glories to gather,
At darkness and night.

5

Though the Gods of the night lie rotten
And their honour be taken away
And the noise of their names forgotten,
Thou, Lord, art God of the day.
Thou art father and saviour and spirit,
O Sun, of the soul that is free
And hath grace of thy grace to inherit
Thine earth and thy sea.

6

The hills and the sands and the beaches,
The waters adrift and afar,
The banks and the creeks and the reaches,
How glad of thee all these are !

The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth :
The delight of thy coming unclouded
Makes music of earth.

7

I, last least voice of her voices,
Give thanks that were mute in me long
To the soul in my soul that rejoices
For the song that is over my song.
Time gives what he gains for the giving
Or takes for his tribute of me ;
My dreams to the wind everliving,
My song to the sea.

A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS

DEDICATION

TO

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

SONGS light as these may sound, though deep and strong
 The heart spake through them, scarce should hope to please
 Ears tuned to strains of loftier thoughts than throng
 Songs light as these

Yet grace may set their sometime doubt at ease,
 Nor need their too rash reverence fear to wrong
 The shrine it serves at and the hope it sees.

For childlike loves and laughers thence prolong
 Notes that bid enter, fearless as the breeze,
 Even to the shrine of holiest-hearted song,
 Songs light as these.

IN HARBOUR

I

GOODNIGHT and goodbye to the life whose signs
denote us
As mourners clothed with regret for the life gone by
To the waters of gloom whence winds of the day
spring float us
Goodnight and goodbye.

A time is for mourning, a season for grief to sigh ;
But were we not fools and blind, by day to devote us
As thralls to the darkness, unseen of the sundawn
eye?

We have drunken of Lethe at length, we have eaten
of lotus ;
What hurts it us here that sorrows are born and die ?
We have said to the dream that caressed and the
dread that smote us
Goodnight and goodbye.

II

Outside of the port ye are moored in, lying
Close from the wind and at ease from the tide,
What sounds come swelling, what notes fall dying
Outside ?

They will not cease, they will not abide :
Voices of presage in darkness crying
Pass and return and relapse aside.

Ye see not, but hear ye not wild wings flying
To the future that wakes from the past that died ?
Is grief still sleeping, is joy not sighing
Outside ?

THE WAY OF THE WIND

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow
None may measure, as none can say
How the heart in her shows the swallow
The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay
Waves that whiten on wrecks that wallow,
Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow
Thought and hope and the red last ray,
Swim the waters of years that follow
The wind's way.

“HAD I WIST”

HAD I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing
 Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's
 bright mist,

How the time should come for hearts to sigh in
 saying

“ Had I wist ”—

Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,
 Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,
 Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying
 Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts
 resist :

Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and
 straying,

“ Had I wist.”

RECOLLECTIONS

YEARS upon years, as a course of clouds that thicken,
 Thronging the ways of the wind that shifts and
 veers,
 Pass, and the flames of remembered fires requicken
 Years upon years.

Surely the thought in a man's heart hopes or fears
 Now that forgetfulness needs must here have stricken
 Anguish, and sweetened the sealed-up springs of
 tears.

Ah, but the strength of regrets that strain and sicken,
 Yearning for love that the veil of death endears,
 Slackens not wing for the wings of years that
 quicken—
 Years upon years.

II

Years upon years, and the flame of love's high altar
 Trembles and sinks, and the sense of listening ears
 Heeds not the sound that it heard of love's blithe
 psalter
 Years upon years.

Only the sense of a heart that hearkens hears,
Louder than dreams that assail and doubts that
 palter,
Sorrow that slept and that wakes ere sundawn peers.

Wakes, that the heart may behold, and yet not falter,
Faces of children as stars unknown of, spheres
Seen but of love, that endures though all things alter,
 Years upon years.

III

Years upon years, as a watch by night that passes,
Pass, and the light of their eyes is fire that sears
Slowly the hopes of the fruit that life amasses
 Years upon years.

Pale as the glimmer of stars on moorland meres
Lighten the shadows reverberate from the glasses
Held in their hands as they pass among their peers.

Lights that are shadows, as ghosts on graveyard
 grasses,
Moving on paths that the moon of memory cheers,
Show but as mists over cloudy mountain passes
 Years upon years.

TIME AND LIFE

I

TIME, thy name is sorrow, says the stricken
Heart of life, laid waste with wasting flame
Ere the change of things and thoughts requicken,
Time, thy name.

Girt about with shadow, blind and lame,
Ghosts of things that smite and thoughts that sicken
Hunt and bound thee down to death and shame.

Eyes of hours whose paces halt or quicken
Read in bloodred lines of loss and blame,
Writ where cloud and darkness round it thicken,
Time, thy name.

II

Nay, but rest is born of me for healing,
—So might haply time, with voice repress,
Speak : is grief the last gift of my dealing ?
Nay, but rest.

All the world is wearied, east and west,
Tired with toil to watch the slow sun wheeling,
Twelve loud hours of life's laborious quest.

Eyes forspent with vigil, faint and reeling,
Find at last my comfort, and are blest,
Not with rapturous light of life's revealing—
Nay, but rest.

A DIALOGUE

I

DEATH, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee :
 Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
 One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
 Death, if thou wilt ?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
 Imperial : but some roof of wildwood tree,
 Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
 From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt ;
 Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
 Death, if thou wilt ?

II

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me ?
 What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
 What things I fashion ? Nay, behold and see,
 Man, what art thou ?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
 What are they but my seedlings ? Earth and sea
 Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me : though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee.

Man, what art thou ?

III

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal ; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive : thy power is made but of our dread,
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee :
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed,
Shall vanish ; all the shows of them shall flee :
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
Death, if thou be.

PLUS ULTRA

FAR beyond the sunrise and the sunset rises
Heaven, with worlds on worlds that lighten and
respond :

Thought can see not thence the goal of hope's sur-
mises

Far beyond.

Night and day have made an everlasting bond
Each with each to hide in yet more deep disguises
Truth, till souls of men that thirst for truth despond.

All that man in pride of spirit slights or prizes,
All the dreams that make him fearful, fain, or fond,
Fade at forethought's touch of life's unknown
surprises

Far beyond.

A DEAD FRIEND

I

GONE, O gentle heart and true,
Friend of hopes foregone,
Hopes and hopeful days with you
Gone?

Days of old that shone
Saw what none shall see anew,
When we gazed thereon

Soul as clear as sunlit dew,
Why so soon pass on,
Forth from all we loved and knew
Gone?

II

Friend of many a season fled,
What may sorrow send
Toward thee now from lips that said
"Friend"?

Sighs and songs to blend
Praise with pain uncomforted
Though the praise ascend?

Darkness hides no dearer head :
Why should darkness end
Day so soon, O dear and dead
Friend ?

III

Dear in death, thou hast thy part
Yet in life, to cheer
Hearts that held thy gentle heart
Dear.

Time and chance may sear
Hope with grief, and death may part
Hand from hand's clasp here ·

Memory, blind with tears that start,
Sees through every tear
All that made thee, as thou art,
Dear.

IV

True and tender, single-souled,
What should memory do
Weeping o'er the trust we hold
True ?

Known and loved of few,
But of these, though small their fold,
Loved how well were you !

Change, that makes of new things old,
Leaves one old thing new ;
Love which promised truth, and told
True.

v

Kind as heaven, while earth's control
Still had leave to bind
Thee, thy heart was toward man's whole
Kind

Thee no shadows blind
Now : the change of hours that roll
Leaves thy sleep behind

Love, that hears thy death-bell toll
Yet, may call to mind
Scarce a soul as thy sweet soul
Kind.

vi

How should life, O friend, forget
Death, whose guest art thou ?
Faith responds to love's regret,
How ?

Still, for us that bow
Sorrowing, still, though life be set,
Shines thy bright mild brow

Yea, though death and thou be met,
Love may find thee now
Still, albeit we know not yet
How.

VII

Past as music fades, that shone
While its life might last ;
As a song-bird's shadow flown
Past !

Death's reverberate blast
Now for music's lord has blown
Whom thy love held fast

Dead thy king, and void his throne :
Yet for grief at last
Love makes music of his own
Past.

PAST DAYS

I

DEAD and gone, the days we had together,
 Shadow-stricken all the lights that shone
 Round them, flown as flies the blown foam's feather,
 Dead and gone.

Where we went, we twain, in time foregone,
 Forth by land and sea, and cared not whether,
 If I go again, I go alone.

Bound am I with time as with a tether ;
 Thee perchance death leads enfranchised on,
 Far from deathlike life and changeful weather,
 Dead and gone.

II

Above the sea and sea-washed town we dwelt,
 We twain together, two brief summers, free
 From heed of hours as light as clouds that melt
 Above the sea.

Free from all heed of aught at all were we,
 Save chance of change that clouds or sunbeams dealt
 And gleam of heaven to windward or to lee.

The Norman downs with bright grey waves for belt
Were more for us than inland ways might be ;
A clearer sense of nearer heaven was felt
 Above the sea.

III

Cliffs and downs and headlands which the forward-
 hasting
Flight of dawn and eve empurples and embrowns,
Wings of wild sea-winds and stormy seasons wasting
 Cliffs and downs,

These, or ever man was, were : the same sky frowns,
Laughs, and lightens, as before his soul, forecasting
Times to be, conceived such hopes as time discrowns.

These we loved of old : but now for me the blasting
Breath of death makes dull the bright small seaward
 towns,
Clothes with human change these all but everlasting
 Cliffs and downs.

AUTUMN AND WINTER

I

THREE months bade wane and wax the wintering
moon

Between two dates of death, while men were fain
Yet of the living light that all too soon
Three months bade wane.

Cold autumn, wan with wrath of wind and rain,
Saw pass a soul sweet as the sovereign tune
That death smote silent when he smote again.

First went my friend, in life's mid light of noon,
Who loved the lord of music : then the strain
Whence earth was kindled like as heaven in June
Three months bade wane.

II

A herald soul before its master's flying
Touched by some few moons first the darkling goal
Where shades rose up to greet the shade, espying
A herald soul ;

Shades of dead lords of music, who control
Men living by the might of men undying,
With strength of strains that make delight of dole.

The deep dense dust on death's dim threshold lying
Trembled with sense of kindling sound that stole
Through darkness, and the night gave ear, descrying
A herald soul.

III

One went before, one after, but so fast
They seem gone hence together, from the shore
Whence we now gaze : yet ere the mightier passed
One went before ;

One whose whole heart of love, being set of yore
On that high joy which music lends us, cast
Light round him forth of music's radiant store.

Then went, while earth on winter glared aghast,
The mortal god he worshipped, through the door
Wherethrough so late, his lover to the last,
One went before.

IV

A star had set an hour before the sun
Sank from the skies wherethrough his heart's pulse
yet
Thrills audibly : but few took heed, or none,
A star had set.

All heaven rings back, sonorous with regret,
The deep dirge of the sunset : how should one
Soft star be missed in all the concourse met ?

But, O sweet single heart whose work is done,
Whose songs are silent, how should I forget
That ere the sunset's fiery goal was won
A star had set ?

THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER

I

MOURNING on earth, as when dark hours descend,
 Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven ; when hope
 and mirth
 Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend
 Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,
 Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,
 Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth.

Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,
 Thunders, and sound of tides in gulf and firth,
 Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death
 should send
 Mourning on earth.

II

The world's great heart, whence all things strange
 and rare
 Take form and sound, that each inseparate part
 May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share
 The world's great heart—

136 THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER

The fountain forces, whence like steeds that start
Leap forth the powers of earth and fire and air,
Seas that revolve and rivers that depart—

Spake, and were turned to song · yea, all they were,
With all their works, found in his mastering art
Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare
The world's great heart.

III

From the depths of the sea, from the wellsprings of
earth, from the wastes of the midmost night,
From the fountains of darkness and tempest and
thunder, from heights where the soul would be,
The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense,
as an unknown light
From the depths of the sea.

As a vision of heaven from the hollows of ocean, that
none but a god might see,
Rose out of the silence of things UNKNOWN of a
presence, a form, a might,
And we heard as a prophet that hears God's message
against him, and may not flee.

Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with
a rapture of dark delight,
With a terror and wonder whose core was joy, and a
passion of thought set free,
Felt inly the rising of doom divine as a sundawn risen
to sight
From the depths of the sea.

TWO PRELUDES

I

LOHENGRIN

Love, out of the depth of things,
 As a dewfall felt from above,
 From the heaven whence only springs
 Love,

Love, heard from the heights thereof,
 The clouds and the watersprings,
 Draws close as the clouds remove.

And the soul in it speaks and sings,
 A swan sweet-souled as a dove,
 An echo that only rings
 Love.

II

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Fate, out of the deep sea's gloom,
 When a man's heart's pride grows great,
 And nought seems now to foredoom
 Fate.

Fate, laden with fears in wait,
Draws close through the clouds that loom,
Till the soul see, all too late,

More dark than a dead world's tomb,
More high than the sheer dawn's gate,
More deep than the wide sea's womb,
Fate.

THE LUTE AND THE LYRE

DEEP desire, that pierces heart and spirit to the root,
 Finds reluctant voice in verse that yearns like soaring
 fire,
 Takes exultant voice when music holds in high
 pursuit
 Deep desire.

Keen as burns the passion of the rose whose buds
 respire,
 Strong as grows the yearning of the blossom toward
 the fruit,
 Sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones
 tire.

Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's
 flower-soft lute,
 Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre:
 Still the soul feels burn, a flame unslaked though
 these be mute,
 Deep desire.

PLUS INTRA

Soul within sense, immeasurable, obscure,
 Insepulchred and deathless, through the dense
 Deep elements may scarce be felt as pure
 Soul within sense.

From depth and height by measurers left immense,
 Through sound and shape and colour, comes the .
 unsure
 Vague utterance, fitful with supreme suspense.

All that may pass, and all that must endure,
 Song speaks not, painting shows not : more intense
 And keen than these, art wakes with music's lure
 Soul within sense.

CHANGE

BUT now life's face beholden
Seemed bright as heaven's bare brow
With hope of gifts withholden
But now.

From time's full-flowering bough
Each bud spake bloom to embolden
Love's heart, and seal his vow.

Joy's eyes grew deep with olden
Dreams, born he wist not how ;
Thought's meanest garb was golden ;
But now !

A BABY'S DEATH

A LITTLE soul scarce fledged for earth
 Takes wing with heaven again for goal
 Even while we hailed as fresh from birth
 A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,
 Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth,
 What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,
 And all things held in time's control
 Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth
 A little soul.

II

The little feet that never trod
 Earth, never strayed in field or street,
 What hand leads upward back to God
 The little feet ?

A rose in June's most honied heat,
 When life makes keen the kindling sod,
 Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period
A few swift moons have seen complete
Since mother's hands first clasped and shod
The little feet.

III

The little hands that never sought
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,
What gift has death, God's servant, brought
The little hands?

We ask : but love's self silent stands,
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought
To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,
Where hands of guiding angels caught
The little hands.

IV

The little eyes that never knew
Light other than of dawning skies,
What new life now lights up anew
The little eyes?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise
Such light as never heaven let through
To lighten earth from Paradise ?

No storm, we know, may change the blue
Soft heaven that haply death describes ;
No tears, like these in ours, bedew
The little eyes.

V

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,
So strait the wide world's range,
He would not stay to wonder why
Was life so strange ?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange
Beside that house on high
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange ?

That here at once his soul put by
All gifts of time and change,
And left us heavier hearts to sigh
" Was life so strange ? "

VI

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair
The sweet small frame ;
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own heart he
came,
And might not bear
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare
And soft a flame :
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him there
Angel by name.

VII

The song that smiled upon his birthday here
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless tear
 The song that smiled.

HIS name crowned once the mightiest ever styled
Sovereign of arts, and angel . fate and fear
Knew then their master, and were reconciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere
Michael, an angel and a little child,
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier
 The song that smiled.

ONE OF TWAIN

I

ONE of twain, twin-born with flowers that waken,
 Now hath passed from sense of sun and rain :
 Wind from off the flower-crowned branch hath shaken
 One of twain.

One twin flower must pass, and one remain :
 One, the word said soothly, shall be taken,
 And another left : can death refrain ?

Two years since was love's light song mistaken,
 Blessing then both blossoms, half in vain ?
 Night outspeeding light hath overtaken
 One of twain.

II

Night and light ? O thou of heart unwary,
 Love, what knowest thou here at all aright,
 Lured, abused, misled as men by fairy
 Night and light ?

Haply, where thine eyes behold but night,
Soft as o'er her babe the smile of Mary
Light breaks flowerwise into new-born sight.

What though night of light to thee be chary?
What though stars of hope like flowers take flight?
Seest thou all things here, where all see vary
Night and light?

DEATH AND BIRTH

DEATH and birth should dwell not near together ·
 Wealth keeps house not, even for shame, with
 dearth :
 Fate doth ill to link in one brief tether
 Death and birth.

Harsh the yoke that binds them, strange the girth
 Seems that girds them each with each : yet whether ·
 Death be best, who knows, or life on earth ?

Ill the rose-red and the sable feather
 Blend in one crown's plume, as grief with mirth :
 Ill met still are warm and wintry weather,
 Death and birth.

BIRTH AND DEATH

BIRTH and death, twin-sister and twin-brother,
 Night and day, on all things that draw breath,
 Reign, while time keeps friends with one another
 Birth and death.

Each brow-bound with flowers diverse of wreath,
 • Heaven they hail as father, earth as mother,
 Faithful found above them and beneath.

Smiles may lighten tears, and tears may smother
 Smiles, for all that joy or sorrow saith :
 Joy nor sorrow knows not from each other
 Birth and death.

BENEDICTION

BLEST in death and life beyond man's guessing
Little children live and die, possess
Still of grace that keeps them past expressing
 Blest.

Each least chirp that rings from every nest,
Each least touch of flower-soft fingers pressing
Aught that yearns and trembles to be prest,

Each least glance, gives gift of grace, redressing
Grief's worst wrongs : each mother's nurturing breast
Feeds a flower of bliss, beyond all blessing
 Blest.

ETUDE RÉALISTE

A BABY'S feet, like sea-shells pink,
 Might tempt, should heaven see meet,
 An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
 A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
 They stretch and spread and wink
 Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
 Glean half so heavenly sweet
 As shine on life's untrodden brink
 A baby's feet.

II

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled
 Whence yet no leaf expands,
 Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,
 A baby's hands.

Then, fast as warriors grip their brands
 When battle's bolt is hurled,
 They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world—
A baby's hands.

III

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Sees perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
A baby's eyes.

BABYHOOD

I

A BABY shines as bright
 If winter or if May be
 On eyes that keep in sight
 A baby.

Though dark the skies or grey be,
 It fills our eyes with light,
 If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,
 The sweetest thing that may be,
 Yet cannot praise aright
 A baby.

II

All heaven, in every baby born,
 All absolute of earthly leaven,
 Reveals itself, though man may scorn
 All heaven.

Yet man might feel all sin forgiven,
 All grief appeased, all pain outworn,
 By this one revelation given.

Soul, now forget thy burdens borne :
Heart, be thy joys now seven times seven :
Love shows in light more bright than morn
All heaven.

III

What likeness may define, and stray not
From truth's exactest way,
A baby's beauty? Love can say not
What likeness may.

The Mayflower loveliest held in May
Of all that shine and stay not
Laughs not in rosier disarray.

Sleek satin, swansdown, buds that play not
As yet with winds that play,
Would fain be matched with this, and may not •
What likeness may?

IV

Rose, round whose bed
Dawn's cloudlets close,
Earth's brightest-bred
Rose !

No song, love knows,
May praise the head
Your curtain shows.

Ere sleep has fled,
The whole child glows
One sweet live red
Rose.

FIRST FOOTSTEPS

A LITTLE way, more soft and sweet
Than fields aflower with May,
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete
A little way

Eyes full of dawning day
Look up for mother's eyes to meet,
Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet
Its first live leaflet's play,
Love, laughing, leads the little feet
A little way.

A NINTH BIRTHDAY

FEBRUARY 4, 1883.

I

THREE times thrice hath winter's rough white wing
Crossed and curdled wells and streams with ice
Since his birth whose praises love would sing
Three times thrice.

Earth nor sea bears flower nor pearl of price
Fit to crown the forehead of my king,
Honey meet to please him, balm, nor spice.

Love can think of nought but love to bring
Fit to serve or do him sacrifice
Ere his eyes have looked upon the spring
Three times thrice.

II

Three times thrice the world has fallen on slumber,
Shone and waned and withered in a trice,
Frost has fettered Thames and Tyne and Humber
Three times thrice,

Fogs have swoln too thick for steel to slice,
Cloud and mud have soiled with grime and umber
Earth and heaven, defaced as souls with vice,

Winds have risen to wreck, snows fallen to cumber,
Ships and chariots, trapped like rats or mice,
Since my king first smiled, whose years now number
Three times thrice.

III

Three times thrice, in wine of song full-flowing,
Pledge, my heart, the child whose eyes suffice,
Once beheld, to set thy joy-bells going
Three times thrice.

Not the lands of palm and date and rice
Glow more bright when summer leaves them glowing,
Laugh more light when suns and winds entice.

Noon and eve and midnight and cock-crowing,
Child whose love makes life as paradise,
Love should sound your praise with clarions blowing
Three times thrice.

NOT A CHILD

“Not a child . I call myself a boy,”
 Says my king, with accent stern yet mild,
 Now nine years have brought him change of joy ;
 “Not a child.”

How could reason be so far beguiled,
 Err so far from sense's safe employ,
 Stray so wide of truth, or run so wild ?

Seeing his face bent over book or toy,
 Child I called him, smiling : but he smiled
 Back, as one too high for vain annoy—
 Not a child.

II

Not a child ? alack the year !
 What should ail an undefiled
 Heart, that he would fain appear
 Not a child ?

Men, with years and memories piled
 Each on other, far and near,
 Fain again would so be styled :

Fain would cast off hope and fear,
Rest, forget, be reconciled :
Why would you so fain be, dear,
Not a child ?

III

Child or boy, my darling, which you will,
Still your praise finds heart and song employ,
Heart and song both yearning toward you still,
Child or boy.

All joys else might sooner pall or cloy
Love than this which inly takes its fill,
Dear, of sight of your more perfect joy.

Nay, be aught you please, let all fulfil
All your pleasure ; be your world your toy :
Mild or wild we love you, loud or still,
Child or boy.

TO DORA DORIAN

CHILD of two strong nations, heir
Born of high-souled hope that smiled,
Seeing for each brought forth a fair
Child,

By thy gracious brows, and wild
Golden-clouded heaven of hair,
By thine eyes elate and mild,

Hope would fain take heart to swear
Men should yet be reconciled, ~
Seeing the sign she bids thee bear,
Child.

THE ROUNDEL

A ROUNDEL is wrought as a ring or a starbright
 sphere,
 With craft of delight and with cunning of sound
 unsought,
 That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure
 his ear

A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—
 Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of
 rapture or fear—
 That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of
 thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in
 us hear
 Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain
 caught,
 So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or
 tear,

A roundel is wrought.

AT SEA

“FAREWELL and adieu ” was the burden prevailing
Long since in the chant of a home-faring crew ;
And the heart in us echoes, with laughing or wailing,
Farewell and adieu.

Each year that we live shall we sing it anew,
With a water untravelled before us for sailing
And a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew.

The stars of the past and the beacons are paling,
The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue :
But the heart in us chants not an all unavailing
Farewell and adieu.

WASTED LOVE

WHAT shall be done for sorrow
With love whose race is run ?
Where help is none to borrow,
What shall be done ?

In vain his hands have spun
The web, or drawn the furrow :
No rest their toil hath won.

His task is all gone thorough
And fruit thereof is none :
And who dare say to-morrow
What shall be done ?

BEFORE SUNSET

Love's twilight wanes in heaven above,
On earth ere twilight reigns :
Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,
Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains
"Too much, and scarce enough,"
The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove
Love's hands let slip the reins :
And while we look for light of love
Love's twilight wanes.

A SINGING LESSON

FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought, as the proverb rehearses,
 Is good, or was held so, for ladies : but nought
 In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is
 Far-fetched and dear-bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the
 thought
 Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses
 Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof
 wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces
 Men's hearts with possession of music unsought ;
 For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,
 Far-fetched and dear-bought.

FLOWER-PIECES

I

LOVE LIES BLEEDING

LOVE lies bleeding in the bed whereover
 Roses lean with smiling mouths or pleading :
 Earth lies laughing where the sun's dart clove her :
 Love lies bleeding.

Stately shine his purple plumes, exceeding
 Pride of princes : nor shall maid or lover
 Find on earth a fairer sign worth heeding.

Yet may love, sore wounded, scarce recover
 Strength and spirit again, with life receding :
 Hope and joy, wind-winged, about him hover :
 Love lies bleeding.

II

LOVE IN A MIST

Light love in a mist, by the midsummer moon mis-
 guided,
 Scarce seen in the twilight garden if gloom insist,
 Seems vainly to seek for a star whose gleam has
 derided
 Light love in a mist.

All day in the sun, when the breezes do all they list,
His soft blue raiment of cloudlike blossom abided
Unrent and unwithered of winds and of rays that
 kissed.

Blithe-hearted or sad, as the cloud or the sun sub-
 sided,
Love smiled in the flower with a meaning whereof
 none wist
Save two that beheld, as a gleam that before them
 glided,
 Light love in a mist.

THREE FACES

I

VENTIMIGLIA

THE sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank :
 Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and
 free,
 A tall girl paced, with eyes too proud to thank
 The sky and sea.

One dead flat sapphire, void of wrath or glee,
 Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank
 The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.

More deep, more living, shone her eyes that drank
 The breathless light and shed again on me,
 Till pale before their splendour waned and shrank
 The sky and sea.

II

GENOA

Again the same strange might of eyes, that saw
 In heaven and earth nought fairer, overcame
 My sight with rapture of reiterate awe,
 Again the same.

The self-same pulse of wonder shook like flame
The spirit of sense within me : what strange law
Had bid this be, for blessing or for blame ?

To what veiled end that fate or chance foresaw
Came forth this second sister face, that came
Absolute, perfect, fair without a flaw,
 Again the same ?

III

VENICE

Out of the dark pure twilight, where the stream
Flows glimmering, streaked by many a birdlike bark
That skims the gloom whence towers and bridges
 gleam
 Out of the dark,

Once more a face no glance might choose but mark
Shone pale and bright, with eyes whose deep slow
 beam
Made quick the twilight, lifeless else and stark.

The same it seemed, or mystery made it seem,
As those before beholden ; but St. Mark
Ruled here the ways that showed it like a dream
 Out of the dark.

EROS

I

Eros, from rest in isles far-famed,
 With rising Anthesterion rose,
 And all Hellenic heights acclaimed
 Eros.

The sea one pearl, the shore one rose,
 All round him all the flower-month flamed
 And lightened, laughing off repose.

Earth's heart, sublime and unashamed,
 Knew, even perchance as man's heart knows,
 The thirst of all men's nature named
 Eros.

II

Eros, a fire of heart untamed,
 A light of spirit in sense that glows,
 Flamed heavenward still ere earth defamed
 Eros.

Nor fear nor shame durst curb or close
 His golden godhead, marred and maimed,
 Fast round with bonds that burnt and froze.

Ere evil faith struck blind and lamed
Love, pure as fire or flowers or snows,
Earth hailed as blameless and unblamed
Eros.

III

Eros, with shafts by thousands aimed
At laughing lovers round in rows,
Fades from their sight whose tongues proclaimed
Eros.

But higher than transient shapes or shows
The light of love in life inflamed
Springs, toward no goal that these disclose.

Above those heavens which passion claimed
Shines, veiled by change that ebbs and flows,
The soul in all things born or framed,
Eros.

SORROW

SORROW, on wing through the world for ever,
Here and there for awhile would borrow
Rest, if rest might haply deliver
Sorrow.

One thought lies close in her heart gnawn thorough
With pain, a weed in a dried-up river,
A rust-red share in an empty furrow.

Hearts that strain at her chain would sever
The link where yesterday frets to-morrow :
All things pass in the world, but never
Sorrow.

SLEEP

SLEEP, when a soul that her own clouds cover
Wails that sorrow should always keep
Watch, nor see in the gloom above her
Sleep,

Down, through darkness naked and steep,
Sinks, and the gifts of his grace recover
Soon the soul, though her wound be deep.

God beloved of us, all men's lover,
All most weary that smile or weep
Feel thee afar or anear them hover,
Sleep.

ON AN OLD ROUNDEL

Translated by D G Rossetti from the French of Villon.

I

DEATH, from thy rigour a voice appealed,
 And men still hear what the sweet cry saith,
 Crying aloud in thine ears fast sealed,
 Death.

As a voice in a vision that vanisheth,
 Through the grave's gate barred and the portal
 steeled
 The sound of the wail of it travelleth.

Wailing aloud from a heart unhealed,
 It woke response of melodious breath
 From lips now too by thy kiss congealed,
 Death.

II

Ages ago, from the lips of a sad glad poet
 Whose soul was a wild dove lost in the whirling snow,
 The soft keen plaint of his pain took voice to show it
 Ages ago.

So clear, so deep, the divine drear accents flow,
No soul that listens may choose but thrill to know it,
Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throe.

For us there murmurs a nearer voice below it,
Known once of ears that never again shall know,
Now mute as the mouth which felt death's wave
o'erflow it
Ages ago.

A LANDSCAPE BY COURBET

Low lies the mere beneath the moorside, still
And glad of silence : down the wood sweeps clear
To the utmost verge where fed with many a rill
 Low lies the mere.

The wind speaks only summer : eye nor ear .
Sees aught at all of dark, hears aught of shrill,
From sound or shadow felt or fancied here.

Strange, as we praise the dead man's might and skill,
Strange that harsh thoughts should make such heavy
 cheer,
While, clothed with peace by heaven's most gentle will,
 Low lies the mere.

A FLOWER-PIECE BY FANTIN

HEART'S EASE or pansy, pleasure or thought,
 Which would the picture give us of these?
 Surely the heart that conceived it sought
 Heart's ease.

Surely by glad and divine degrees
 The heart impelling the hand that wrought
 Wrought comfort here for a soul's disease.

Deep flowers, with lustre and darkness fraught,
 From glass that gleams as the chill still seas
 Lean and lend for a heart distraught
 Heart's ease.

A NIGHT-PIECE BY MILLET

WIND and sea and cloud and cloud-forsaking
 Mirth of moonlight where the storm leaves free
 Heaven awhile, for all the wrath of waking
 Wind and sea.

Bright with glad mad rapture, fierce with glee,
 Laughs the moon, borne on past cloud's o'er-
 taking
 Fast, it seems, as wind or sail can flee.

One blown sail beneath her, hardly making
 Forth, wild-winged for harbourage yet to be,
 Strives and leaps and pants beneath the breaking
 Wind and sea.

"MARZO PAZZO "

MAD March with the wind in his wings wide-spread,
Leaps from heaven, and the deep dawn's arch
Hails re-risen again from the dead
Mad March.

Soft small flames on rowan and larch
Break forth as laughter on lips that said
Nought till the pulse in them beat love's march,

But the heartbeat now in the lips rose-red
Speaks life to the world, and the winds that parch
Bring April forth as a bride to wed
Mad March.

DEAD LOVE

DEAD love, by treason slain, lies stark,
White as a dead stark-stricken dove :
None that pass by him pause to mark
 Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark
When rings the trumpet blown above :
It will not raise from out the dark
 Dead love.

DISCORD

UNRECONCILED by life's fleet years, that fled
 With changeful clang of pinions wide and wild,
 Though two great spirits had lived, and hence had
 sped

Unreconciled ,

Though time and change, harsh time's imperious
 child,
 That wed strange hands together, might not wed
 High hearts by hope's misprision once beguiled ;

Faith, by the light from either's memory shed,
 Sees, radiant as their ends were undefiled,
 One goal for each — not twain among the dead
 Unreconciled.

CONCORD

RECONCILED by death's mild hand, that giving
Peace gives wisdom, not more strong than mild,
Love beholds them, each without misgiving
Reconciled.

Each on earth alike of earth reviled,
Hated, feared, derided, and forgiving,
Each alike had heaven at heart, and smiled.

Both bright names, clothed round with man's thanks-
giving,
Shine, twin stars above the storm-drifts piled,
Dead and deathless, whom we saw not living
Reconciled.

MOURNING

ALAS my brother ! the cry of the mourners of old
That cried on each other,
All crying aloud on the dead as the death-note rolled,
Alas my brother !

As flashes of dawn that mists from an east wind
smother
With fold upon fold,
The past years gleam that linked us one with another.

Time sunders hearts as of brethren whose eyes
behold
No more their mother :
But a cry sounds yet from the shrine whose fires wax
cold,
Alas my brother !

APEROTOS EROS

STRONG as death, and cruel as the grave,
Clothed with cloud and tempest's blackening breath,
Known of death's dread self, whom none outbrave,
 Strong as death,

Love, brow-bound with anguish for a wreath,
Fierce with pain, a tyrant-hearted slave,
Burns above a world that groans beneath

Hath not pity power on thee to save,
Love? hath power no pity? Nought he saith,
Answering : blind he walks as wind or wave,
 Strong as death.

TO CATULLUS

My brother, my Valerius, dearest head
 Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother
 Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read
 My brother.

No dust that death or time can strew may smother
 Love and the sense of kinship only bred
 From loves and hates at one with one another.

To thee was Cæsar's self nor dear nor dread,
 Song and the sea were sweeter each than other :
 How should I living fear to call thee dead,
 My brother?

“INSULARUM OCELLE”

SARK, fairer than aught in the world that the lit skies
 cover,
 Laughs inly behind her cliffs, and the seafarers mark
 As a shrine where the sunlight serves, though the
 blown clouds hover,
 Sark.

We mourn, for love of a song that outsang the lark,
 That nought so lovely beholden of Sirmio's lover
 Made glad in Propontis the flight of his Pontic bark.

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal as heaven is above
 her,
 And splendid and strange as the sea that upbears as
 an ark,
 As a sign for the rapture of storm-spent eyes to
 discover,
 Sark.

IN SARK

ABREAST and ahead of the sea is a crag's front cloven
asunder

With strong sea-breach and with wasting of winds
whence terror is shed

As a shadow of death from the wings of the darkness
on waters that thunder

Abreast and ahead.

At its edge is a sepulchre hollowed and hewn for a
lone man's bed,

Propped open with rock and agape on the sky and
the sea thereunder,

But roofed and walled in well from the wrath of them
slept its dead.

Here might not a man drink rapture of rest, or
delight above wonder,

Beholding, a soul disembodied, the days and the
nights that fled,

With splendour and sound of the tempest around and
above him and under,

Abreast and ahead?

IN GUERNSEY

TO THEODORE WATTS

I

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,
 Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,
 Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures
 The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,
 This blessing given of beauty that endures,
 This glory shown us, not to pass but stay?•

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures
 What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—
 The word that seals for ever mine and yours
 The heavenly bay.

II

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
 What new delight of waters, may this be,
 The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
 My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,
Who hast my soul for ever : cliff and sand
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
Strike out from shore : more close it brings to me,
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
My mother sea.

III

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and
o'er us
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and
strong
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten
before us
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not
wrong ;
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's
chorus ;
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the
song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that
wore us,
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that
throng,
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
Across and along

IV

On Dante's track by some funereal spell
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not
back
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell
On Dante's track.

The grey path ends : the gaunt rocks gape : the
black
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,
Glares darkness : are the fires of old grown slack ?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell
On Dante's track ?

V

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands :
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so
By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe,
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow
Seems visible in this flame : there Geryon stands :
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show
By mere men's hands.

VI

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart
athirst and fasting,
Hungers here, barred up for ever, whence as one
whom dreams affright
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening
doom and casting Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands,
clothed with light,
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside : but here
the night speaks, blasting
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known
from depth to height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in
souls forecasting
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's
reach, and higher than sight
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with
everlasting Night.

VII

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst :
No fear more fearful than its own may find
The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and
nursed

This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,
The house accurst.

VIa

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,
The house that had the light of the earth for guest
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name
Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest
When storm laid waste his eyrie : hence he came
Again, when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame
And mocked for madness : worst, they sware, was
best :
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,
Beloved and blest.

ENVOI

FLY, white butterflies, out to sea,
Frail pale wings for the winds to try,
Small white wings that we scarce can see
Fly.

Hère and there may a chance-caught eye
Note in a score of you twain or three
Brighter or darker of tinge or dye.

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,
Some fly soft as a low long sigh :
All to the haven where each would be
Fly.

ATHENS: AN ODE

ATHENS

AN ODE

ERE from under earth again like fire the violet
 kindle, [*Sir.* 1
 Ere the holy buds and hoar on olive-branches
 bloom,
ERE the crescent of the last pale month of winter
 dwindle,
 Shrink, and fall as falls a dead leaf on the dead
 month's tomb,
ROUND the hills whose heights the first-born olive-
 blossom brightened,
 Round the city brow-bound once with violets like
 a bride,
UP from under earth again a light that long since
 lightened
 Breaks, whence all the world took comfort as all
 time takes pride.
PRIDE have all men in their fathers that were free
 before them,
 In the warriors that begat us free-born pride have
 we :
BUT the fathers of their spirits, how may men adore
 them,
 With what rapture may we praise, who bade our
 souls be free ?

Sons of Athens born in spirit and truth are all born
free men ;

Most of all, we, nurtured where the north wind
holds his reign :

Children all we sea-folk of the Salaminian seamen,
Sons of them that beat back Persia they that beat
back Spain

Since the songs of Greece fell silent, none like ours
have risen ;

Since the sails of Greece fell slack, no ships have
sailed like ours ;

How should we lament not, if her spirit sit in
prison ?

How should we rejoice not, if her wreaths renew
their flowers ?

All the world is sweeter, if the Athenian violet
quicken :

All the world is brighter, if the Athenian sun
return .

All things foul on earth wax fainter, by that sun's
light stricken :

All ill growths are withered, where those fragrant
flower-lights burn.

All the wandering waves of seas with all their warring
waters

Roll the record on for ever of the sea-fight there,
When the capes were battle's lists, and all the straits
were slaughter's,

And the myriad Medes as foam-flakes on the
scattering air.

Ours the lightning was that cleared the north and lit
the nations,

But the light that gave the whole world light of
old was she .

Ours an age or twain, but hers are endless generations :

All the world is hers at heart, and most of all are we.

Ye that bear the name about you of her glory, [*Ant* 1.

Men that wear the sign of Greeks upon you sealed,
Yours is yet the choice to write yourselves in story

Sons of them that fought the Marathonian field.
Slaves of no man were ye, said your warrior poet,

Neither subject unto man as underlings ·
Yours is now the season here wherein to show it,

If the seed ye be of them that knew not kings
If ye be not, swords nor words alike found brittle

From the dust of death to raise you shall prevail :
Subject swords and dead men's words may stead you
little,

If their old king-hating heart within you fail.
If your spirit of old, and not your bonds, be broken,
If the kingless heart be molten in your breasts,
By what signs and wonders, by what word or token,
Shall ye drive the vultures from your eagles' nests ?

All the gains of tyrants Freedom counts for losses ;
Nought of all the work done holds she worth the
work,

When the slaves whose faith is set on crowns and
crosses

Drive the Cossack bear against the tiger Turk.
Neither cross nor crown nor crescent shall ye bow to,
Nought of Araby nor Jewry, priest nor king :
As your watchword was of old, so be it now too :

As from lips long stilled, from yours let healing
spring.

Through the fights of old, your battle-cry was healing,
And the Saviour that ye called on was the Sun :
Dawn by dawn behold in heaven your God, revealing
Light from darkness as when Marathon was won.
Gods were yours yet strange to Turk or Galilean,
Light and Wisdom only then as gods adored :
Pallas was your shield, your comforter was Pæan,
From your bright world's navel spake the Sun your
Lord.

Though the names be lost, and changed the signs
of Light and Wisdom be, [Ep 1
By these only shall men conquer, by these only be set
free :
When the whole world's eye was Athens, these were
yours, and theirs were ye.
Light was given you of your wisdom, light ye gave
the world again :
As the sun whose godhead lightened on her soul was
Hellas then :
Yea, the least of all her children as the chosen of
other men.
Change your hearts not with your garments, nor your
faith with creeds that change .
Truth was yours, the truth which time and chance
transform not nor estrange :
Purer truth nor higher abides not in the reach of
time's whole range.
Gods are they in all men's memories and for all time's
periods,
They that hurled the host back seaward which had
scourged the sea with rods :
Gods for us are all your fathers, even the least of
these as gods.

In the dark of days the thought of them is with us,
strong to save,
They that had no lord, and made the Great King
lesser than a slave,
They that rolled all Asia back on Asia, broken like a
wave.
No man's men were they, no master's and no God's
but these their own :
Gods not loved in vain nor served amiss, nor all yet
overthrown :
Love of country, Freedom, Wisdom, Light, and none
save these alone.
King by king came up against them, sire and son,
and turned to flee :
Host on host roared westward, mightier each than
each, if more might be :
Field to field made answer, clamorous like as wave
• to wave at sea.
Strife to strife responded, loud as rocks to clangorous
rocks respond
Where the deep rings wreck to seamen held in tem-
pest's thrall and bond,
Till when war's bright work was perfect peace as
radiant rose beyond :
Peace made bright with fruit of battle, stronger made
for storm gone down,
With the flower of song held heavenward for the
violet of her crown
Woven about the fragrant forehead of the fostress
maiden's town.
Gods arose alive on earth from under stroke of human
hands :
As the hands that wrought them, these are dead, and
mixed with time's dead sands •

But the godhead of supernal song, though these now
stand not, stands.

Pallas is not, Phœbus breathes no more in breathing
brass or gold.

Clytæmnestra towers, Cassandra wails, for ever.
Time is bold,

But nor heart nor hand hath he to unwrite the scrip-
tures writ of old.

Dead the great chryselephantine God, as dew last
evening shed :

Dust of earth or foam of ocean is the symbol of his
head :

Earth and ocean shall be shadows when Prometheus
shall be dead.

Fame around her warriors living rang through Greece
and lightened, [Str 2

Moving equal with their stature, stately with their
strength :

Thebes and Lacedæmon at their breathing presence
brightened,

Sense or sound of them filled all the live land's
breadth and length

All the lesser tribes put on the pure Athenian fashion,
One Hellenic heart was from the mountains to the
sea :

Sparta's bitter self grew sweet with high half-human
passion,

And her dry thorns flushed aflower in strait Ther-
mopylæ.

Fruitless yet the flowers had fallen, and all the deeds
died fruitless,

Save that tongues of after men, the children of her
peace,

Took the tale up of her glories, transient else and
rootless,
And in ears and hearts of all men left the praise of
Greece
Fair the war-time was when still, as beacon answering

Sea to land flashed fight, and thundered note of
wrath or cheer ;
But the strength of noonday night hath power to
waste and weaken,
Nor may light be passed from hand to hand of
year to year
If the dying deed be saved not, ere it die for ever,
By the hands and lips of men more wise than years
are strong ;
If the spul of man take heed not that the deed die
never,
•Clothed about with purple and gold of story,
crowned with song
Still the burning heart of boy and man alike re-
joices,
Hearing words which made it seem of old for all
who sang
That their heaven of heavens waxed happier when
from free men's voices
Well-beloved Harmodius and Aristogeiton rang
Never fell such fragrance from the flower-month's
rose-red kirtle
As from chaplets on the bright friends' brows who
slew their lord :
Greener grew the leaf and balmier blew the flower of
myrtle
When its blossom sheathed the sheer tyrannicidal
sword

None so glorious garland crowned the feast Pan-
athenæan

As this wreath too frail to fetter fast the Cyprian
dove .

None so fiery song sprang sunwards annual as the
pæan

Praising perfect love of friends and perfect country's
love.

Higher than highest of all those heavens wherefrom
the starry [Ant 2

Song of Homer shone above the rolling fight,
Gleams like spring's green bloom on boughs all gaunt
and gnarry

Soft live splendour as of flowers of foam in flight,
Glow's a glory of mild-winged maidens upward mount-
ing

Sheer through air made shrill with strokes of smooth
swift wings

Round the rocks beyond foot's reach, past eyesight's
counting,

Up the cleft where iron wind of winter rings

Round a God fast clenched in iron jaws of fetters,

Him who culled for man the fruitful flower of fire,

Bared the darkling scriptures writ in dazzling letters,

Taught the truth of dreams deceiving men's desire,

Gave their water-wandering chariot-seats of ocean

Wings, and bade the rage of war-steeds champ the
rein,

Showed the symbols of the wild birds' wheeling
motion,

Waged for man's sake war with God and all his
train.

Earth, whose name was also Righteousness, a
mother

Many-named and single-natured, gave him breath
Whence God's wrath could wring but this word and
gone other—

He may smite me, yet he shall not do to death.

Him the tongue that sang triumphant while tor-
mented

Sang as loud the sevenfold storm that roared ere-
while

Round the towers of Thebes till wrath might rest
contented :

Sang the flight from smooth soft-sanded banks of
Nile,

When like mateless doves that fly from snare or
tether

Came the suppliants landwards trembling as they
trod,

And the prayer took wing from all their tongues
together—

King of kings, most holy of holies, blessed God.

But what mouth may chant again, what heart may
know it,

All the rapture that all hearts of men put on

When of Salamis the time-transcending poet

Sang, whose hand had chased the Mede at Mara-
thon ?

Darker dawned the song with stormier wings above
the watch-fire spread [Ep 2.

Whence from Ida toward the hill of Hermes leapt the
light that said

Troy was fallen, a torch funereal for the king's triumphal head.

Dire indeed the birth of Leda's womb that had God's self to sire

Bloomed, a flower of love that stung the soul with fangs that gnaw like fire .

But the twin-born human-fathered sister-flower bore fruit more dire.

Scarce the cry that called on airy heaven and all swift winds on wing,

Wells of river-heads, and countless laugh of waves past reckoning,

Earth which brought forth all, and the orbèd sun that looks on everything,

Scarce that cry fills yet men's hearts more full of heart-devouring dread

Than the murderous word said mocking, how the child whose blood he shed

Might clasp fast and kiss her father where the dead salute the dead.

But the latter note of anguish from the lips that mocked her lord,

When her son's hand bared against the breast that suckled him his sword,

How might man endure, O Æschylus, to hear it and record ?

How might man endure, being mortal yet, O thou most highest, to hear ?

How record, being born of woman ? Surely not thy Furies near,

Surely this beheld, this only, blasted hearts to death with fear.

Not the hissing hair, nor flakes of blood that oozed from eyes of fire,

Nor the snort of savage sleep that snuffed the hunger-
ing heart's desire
Where the hunted prey found hardly space and har-
bour to respire ;
She whose likeness called them—"Sleep ye, ho ?
what need of you that sleep ?"
(Ah, what need indeed, where she was, of all shapes
that night may keep
Hidden dark as death and deeper than men's dreams
of hell are deep ?)
She the murderess of her husband, she the huntress
of her son,
More than ye was she, the shadow that no God with-
stands but one,
Wisdom equal-eyed and stronger and more splendid
than the sun.
Yea, no God may stand betwixt us and the shadows
of our deeds,
Nor the light of dreams that lighten darkness, nor the
prayer that pleads,
But the wisdom equal-souled with heaven, the light
alone that leads.
Light whose law bids home those childless children
of eternal night,
Soothed and reconciled and mastered and transmuted
in men's sight
Who behold their own souls, clothed with darkness
once, now clothed with light.
King of kings and father crowned of all our fathers
crowned of yore,
Lord of all the lords of song, whose head all heads
bow down before,
Glory be to thee from all thy sons in all tongues ever-
more..

Rose and vine and olive and deep ivy-bloom en-
twining [Str 3

Close the goodliest grave that e'er they closest
might entwine

Keep the wind from wasting and the sun from too
strong shining

Where the sound and light of sweetest songs still
float and shine.

Here the music seems to illumine the shade, the light
to whisper

Song, the flowers to put not odours only forth, but
words

Sweeter far than fragrance : here the wandering
wreaths twine crisper

Far, and louder far exults the note of all wild
birds.

Thoughts that change us, joys that crown and sorrows
that enthrone us,

Passions that enrobe us with a clearer air than
ours,

Move and breathe as living things beheld round white
Colonus,

Audibler than melodies and visibler than flowers.

Love, in fight unconquered, Love, with spoils of great
men laden,

Never sang so sweet from throat of woman or of
dove :

Love, whose bed by night is in the soft cheeks of a
maiden,

And his march is over seas, and low roofs lack not
Love ;

Nor may one of all that live, ephemeral or eternal,

Fly nor hide from Love ; but whoso clasps him
fast goes mad.

Never since the first-born year with flowers first-born
grew vernal

Such a song made listening hearts of lovers glad or
sad.

Never sounded note so radiant at the rayless portal
Opening wide on the all-concealing lowland of the
dead

As the music mingling, when her doomsday marked
her mortal,

From her own and old men's voices round the
bride's way shed,

Round the grave her bride-house, hewn for endless
habitation,

Where, shut out from sunshine, with no bridegroom
by, she slept ;

But beloved of all her dark and fateful generation,

But with all time's tears and praise besprinkled
and bewept .

Well-beloved of outcast father and self-slaughtered
mother,

Born, yet unpolluted, of their blind incestuous
bed ;

Best-beloved of him for whose dead sake she died,
her brother,

Hallowing by her own life's gift her own born
brother's head ;

Not with wine or oil nor any less libation [Ant 3.

Hallowed, nor made sweet with humbler perfume's
breath ;

Not with only these redeemed from desecration,

But with blood and spirit of life poured forth to
death ;

Blood unspotted, spirit unsullied, life devoted,
Sister too supreme to make the bride's hope
good,

Daughter too divine as woman to be noted,
Spouse of only death in mateless maidenhood.

Yea, in her was all the prayer fulfilled, the saying
All accomplished—*Would that fate would let me
wear*

*Hallowed innocence of words and all deeds, weighing
Well the laws thereof, begot on holier air,*

Far on high sublimely stablished, whereof only

*Heaven is father; nor did birth of mortal mould
Bring them forth, nor shall oblivion lull to lonely*

Slumber. Great in these is God, and grows not old
Therefore even that inner darkness where she
perished

Surely seems as holy and lovely, seen aright,
As desirable and as dearly to be cherished,

As the haunt closed in with laurels from the light,
Deep inwound with olive and wild vine inwoven,

Where a godhead known and unknown makes men
pale,

But the darkness of the twilight noon is cloven

Still with shrill sweet moan of many a nightingale
Closer clustering there they make sweet noise to-
gether,

Where the fearful gods look gentler than our fear,
And the grove thronged through with birds of holiest
feather

Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of dark things
near.

There her father, called upon with signs of wonder,
Passed with tenderest words away by ways un-
known,

Not by sea-storm stricken down, nor touched of
thunder,
To the dark benign deep underworld, alone.

Third of three that ruled in Athens, kings with
sceptral song for staff, [Ep 3
Gladdest heart that God gave ever milk and wine of
thought to quaff,
Clearest eye that lightened ever to the broad lip's
lordliest laugh,
Praise be thine as theirs whose tragic brows the
loftier leaf engirds
For the live and lyric lightning of thy honey-hearted
words,
Soft like sunny dewy wings of clouds and bright as
crying of birds ;
Full of all sweet rays and notes that make of earth
and air and sea
One great light and sound of laughter from one great
God's heart, to be
Sign and semblance of the gladness of man's life
where men breathe free.
With no Loxian sound obscure God uttered once, and
all time heard,
All the soul of Athens, all the soul of England in
that word :
Rome arose the second child of freedom . northward
rose the third.
Ere her Boreal dawn came kindling seas afoam and
fields of snow,
Yet again, while Europe groaned and grovelled, shone
like suns aglow
Doria splendid over Genoa, Venice bright with Dan-
dolo, .

Dead was Hellas, but Ausonia by the light of dead
men's deeds
Rose and walked awhile alive, though mocked as
whom the fen-fire leads
By the creed-wrought faith of faithless souls that
mock their doubts with creeds.
Dead are these, and man is risen again : and haply
now the three
Yet coequal and triune may stand in story, marked
as free
By the token of the washing of the waters of the
sea.
Athens first of all earth's kindred many-tongued and
many-kinned
Had the sea to friend and comfort, and for kinsman
had the wind :
She that bare Columbus next : then she that made
her spoil of Ind
She that hears not what man's rage but only what
the sea-wind saith :
She that turned Spain's ships to cloud-wrack at the
blasting of her breath,
By her strengths of strong-souled children and of
strong winds done to death.
North and south the Great King's galleons went in
Persian wise · and here
She, with Æschylean music on her lips that laughed
back fear,
In the face of Time's grey godhead shook the splen-
dour of her spear.
Fair as Athens then with foot upon her foeman's
front, and strong
Even as Athens for redemption of the world from
sovereign wrong,

Like as Athens crowned she stood before the sun
with crowning song.

All the world is theirs with whom is freedom : first
of all the free,

Blest are they whom song has crowned and clothed
with blessing : these as we,

These alone have part in spirit with the sun that
crowns the sea

April 1881.

THE STATUE OF VICTOR HUGO

I

SINCE in Athens God stood plain for adoration,
 Since the sun beheld his likeness reared in stone,
 Since the bronze or gold of human consecration
 Gave to Greece her guardian's form and feature
 shown,
 Never hand of sculptor, never heart of nation,
 Found so glorious aim in all these ages flown
 As is theirs who rear for all time's acclamation
 Here the likeness of our mightiest and their own.

2

Theirs and ours and all men's living who behold him
 Crowned with garlands multiform and manifold;
 Praise and thanksgiving of all mankind enfold him
 Who for all men casts abroad his gifts of gold
 With the gods of song have all men's tongues enrolled
 him,
 With the helpful gods have all men's hearts
 enrolled:
 Ours he is who love him, ours whose hearts' hearts
 hold him
 Fast as his the trust that hearts like his may hold.

3

He, the heart most high, the spirit on earth most
blameless,

Takes in charge all spirits, holds all hearts in
trust :

As the sea-wind's on the sea his ways are taméless,
As the laws that steer the world his works are just.

All most noble feel him nobler, all most shameless

Feel his wrath and scorn make pale their pride and
lust :

All most poor and lowliest, all whose wrongs were
nameless,

Feel his word of comfort raise them from the dust.

4

Pride of place and lust of empire bloody-fruited

Knew the blasting of his breath on leaf and fruit :

Now the hand that smote the death-tree now dis-
rooted

Plants the refuge-tree that has man's hope for root.

Ah, but we by whom his darkness was saluted,

How shall now all we that see his day salute ?

How should love not seem by love's own speech
confuted,

Song before the sovereign singer not be mute ?

5

With what worship, by what blessing, in what
measure,

May we sing of him, salute him, or adore,

With what hymn for praise, what thanksgiving for
pleasure,

Who had given us more than heaven, and gives us
more ?

Heaven's whole treasury, filled up full with night's
 whole treasure,
 Holds not so divine or deep a starry store
 As the soul supreme that deals forth worlds at leisure
 Clothed with light and darkness, dense with flower
 and ore.

6

Song had touched the bourn . fresh verses over-
 flow it,
 Lotid and radiant, waves on waves on waves that
 throng ;
 Still the tide grows, and the sea-mark still below it
 Sinks and shifts and rises, changed and swept
 along.
 Rose it like a rock ? the waters overthrow it,
 And another stands beyond them sheer and strong :
 Goal by goal pays down its prize, and yields its poet
 Tribute claimed of triumph, palm achieved of song.

7

Since his hand that holds the keys of fear and wonder
 Opened on the high priest's dreaming eyes a door
 Whence the lights of heaven and hell above and
 under
 Shone, and smote the face that men bow down
 before,
 Thrice again one singer's note had cloven in sunder
 Night, who blows again not one blast now but
 four,
 And the fourfold heaven is kindled with his thunder,
 And the stars about his forehead are fourscore.

8

From the deep soul's depths where alway love
abounded

First had risen a song with healing on its wings
Whence the dews of mercy raining balms unbounded
Shed their last compassion even on sceptred things.¹
Even on heads that like a curse the crown surrounded
Fell his crowning pity, soft as cleansing springs ;
And the sweet last note his wrath relenting sounded
Bade men's hearts be melted not for slaves but
kings.

9

Next, that faith might strengthen fear and love
embolden,

On the creeds of priests a scourge of sunbeams fell
And its flash made bare the deeps of heaven, beholden
Not of men that cry, Lord, Lord, from church or
cell.²

Hope as young as dawn from night obscure and olden
Rose again, such power abides in truth's one spell :
Night, if dawn it be that touches her, grows golden ,
Tears, if such as angels weep, extinguish hell.

10

Through the blind loud mills of barren blear-eyed
learning

Where in dust and darkness children's foreheads
bow,
While men's labour, vain as wind or water turning
Wheels and sails of dreams, makes life a leafless
bough,

¹ *La Pitié Suprême.* 1879

² *Religions et Religion* 1880.

Fell the light of scorn and pity touched with yearning,
 Next, from words that shone as heaven's own kind-
 ling brow.¹

Stars were these as watch-fires on the world's waste
 burning,
 Stars that fade not in the fourfold sunrise now.²

II

Now the voice that faints not till all wrongs be
 • wroken

Sounds as might the sun's song from the morning's
 breast,

All the seals of silence sealed of night are broken,

All the winds that bear the fourfold word are blest

All the keen fierce east flames forth one fiery token ;

All the north is loud with life that knows not rest,

All the south with song as though the stars had
 spoken ;

All the judgment-fire of sunset scathes the west.

12

Sound of pæan, roll of chanted panegyric,

Though by Pindar's mouth song's trumpet spake
 forth praise,

March of warrior songs in Pythian mood or Pyrrhic,

Though the blast were blown by lips of ancient
 days,

¹ *L'Ane* 1880

² *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit* I *Le Livre satirique*
 II *Le Livre dramatique* III *Le Livre lyrique* IV *Le*
Livre épique. 1881.

Ring not clearer than the clarion of satiric
 Song whose breath sweeps bare the plague-infected
 ways
 Till the world be pure as heaven is for the lyric
 Sun to rise up clothed with radiant sounds as rays.

13

Clear across the cloud-rack fluctuant and erratic
 As the strong star smiles that lets no mourner
 mourn,
 Hymned alike from lips of Lesbian choirs or Attic
 Once at evensong and morning newly born,
 Clear and sure above the changes of dramatic
 Tide and current, soft with love and keen with
 scorn,
 Smiles the strong sweet soul of maidenhood, ecstatic
 And inviolate as the red glad mouth of morn.

14

Pure and passionate as dawn, whose apparition
 Thrills with fire from heaven the wheels of hours
 that whirl,
 Rose and passed her radiance in serene transition
 From his eyes who sought a grain and found a
 pearl.
 But the food by cunning hope for vain fruition
 Lightly stolen away from keeping of a churl
 Left the bitterness of death and hope's perdition
 On the lip that scorn was wont for shame to curl.¹

¹ *Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus. 1. Margarita, comédie.*

15

Over waves that darken round the wave-worn rover
 Rang his clarion higher than winds cried round
 the ship,
 Rose a pageant of set suns and storms blown over,
 Hands that held life's guerdons fast or let them
 slip.
 But no tongue may tell, no thanksgiving discover,
 Half the heaven of blessing, soft with clouds that
 drip,
 Keerf with beams that kindle, dear as love to lover,
 Opening by the spell's strength on his lyric lip.

16

By that spell the soul transfigured and dilated
 Puts forth wings that widen, breathes a brightening
 air,
 Feeds on light and drinks of music, whence elated
 All her sense grows godlike, seeing all depths made
 All the mists wherein before she sat belated
 Shrink, till now the sunlight knows not if they
 were ;
 All this earth transformed is Eden recreated,
 With the breath of heaven remurmuring in her hair.

17

Sweeter far than aught of sweet that April nurses
 Deep in dew-dropt woodland folded fast and furled
 Breathes the fragrant song whose burning dawn
 disperses
 Darkness, like the surge of armies backward hurled,

Even as though the touch of spring's own hand, that
 pierces
 Earth with life's delight, had hidden in the im-
 pearled
 Golden bells and buds and petals of his verses
 All the breath of all the flowers in all the world.

18

But the soul therein, the light that our souls follow,
 Fires and fills the song with more of prophet's
 pride,
 More of life than all the gulfs of death may swallow,
 More of flame than all the might of night may hide.
 Though the whole dark age were loud and void and
 hollow,
 Strength of trust were here, and help for all souls
 tried,
 And a token from the flight of that strange swallow¹
 Whose migration still is toward the wintry side

19

Never came such token for divine solution
 From the oraculous live darkness whence of yore
 Ancient faith sought word of help and retribution,
 Truth to lighten doubt, a sign to go before.
 Never so baptismal waters of ablution
 Bathed the brows of exile on so stern a shore,
 Where the lightnings of the sea of revolution
 Flashed across them ere its thunders yet might
 roar.

¹ Je suis une hirondelle étrange, car j'émigre
 Du côté de l'hiver.

20

By the lightning's light of present revelation
 Shown, with epic thunder as from skies that flown,
 Clothed in darkness as of darkling expiation,
 Rose a vision of dead stars and suns gone down,
 Whence of old fierce fire devoured the star-struck
 nation,
 Till its wrath and woe lit red the raging town,
 Now made glorious with his statue's crowning station,
 Where may never gleam again a viler crown.

21

King, with time for throne and all the years for pages,
 He shall reign though all thrones else be over-
 hurled,
 Served of souls that have his living words for wages,
 Crowned of heaven each dawn that leaves his brows
 impearled ;
 Girt about with robes unrent of storm that rages,
 Robes not wrought with hands, from no loom's
 weft unfurled ;
 All the praise of all earth's tongues in all earth's ages,
 All the love of all men's hearts in all the world.

22

Yet what hand shall carve the soul or cast the spint,
 Mould the face of fame, bid glory's feature glow ?
 Who bequeath for eyes of ages hence to inherit
 Him, the Master, whom love knows not if it know ?
 Scarcely perfect praise of men man's work might
 merit,
 Scarcely bid such aim to perfect stature grow,
 Were his hand the hand of Phidias who shall rear it,
 And his soul the very soul of Angelo.

23

Michael, awful angel of the world's last session,
 Once on earth, like him, with fire of suffering tried,
 Thine it were, if man's it were, without transgression,
 Thine alone, to take this toil upon thy pride
 Thine, whose heart was great against the world's
 oppression,

Even as his whose word is lamp and staff and guide :
 Advocate for man, untired of intercession,
 Pleads his voice for slaves whose lords his voice
 defied

24

Earth, with all the kings and thralls on earth, below it,
 Heaven alone, with all the worlds in heaven, above,
 Let his likeness rise for suns and stars to know it,
 High for men to worship, plain for men to love :
 Brow that braved the tides which fain would over-
 flow it,

Lip that gave the challenge, hand that flung the
 glove ;
 Comforter and prophet, Paraclete and poet,
 Soul whose emblems are an eagle and a dove.

25

Sun, that hast not seen a loftier head wax hoary,
 Earth, which hast not shown the sun a nobler birth,
 Time, that hast not on thy scroll defiled and gory
 One man's name writ brighter in its whole wide
 girth, .

Witness, till the final years fulfil their story,
 Till the stars break off the music of their mirth,
 What among the sons of men was this man's glory,
 What the vesture of his soul revealed on earth.

SONNETS

HOPE AND FEAR

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
 With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
 Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
 Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men
 grope
 Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can
 ope,
 And makes for joy the very darkness dear
 That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that
 fear
 At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
 Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
 May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
 What once being known leaves time no power to
 appal;
 Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
 The kind wise word that falls from years that
 fall—
 “ Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.”

AFTER SUNSET

“Si quis piorum Manibus locus.”

I

STRAIGHT from the sun's grave in the deep clear
west

A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life : and I,
Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky
Takes life renewed, and all night's godlike breast
Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest

By growth and change of ardours felt on high,
Make onward, till the last flame fall and die
And all the world by night's broad hand hieblest.
Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,
Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath
Blows more of benediction than the morn,
So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith
That half our heart of life there lies forlorn
May light or breath at least of hope be born.

II

The wind was soft before the sunset fled :

Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day
Is lowered along a red funereal way
Down to the dark that knows not white from red,

A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,
Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray
Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from
grey,
Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead
From far beyond the sunset, far above,
Full toward the starry soundless east it blows
Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,
Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove ;
Till more and more as darkness grows and glows
Silence and night seem likest life and love.

III

If light of life outlive the set of sun
That men call death and end of all things, then
How should not that which life held best for men
And proved most precious, though it seem undone
By force of death and woful victory won,
Be first and surest of revival, when
Death shall bow down to life arisen again ?
So shall the soul seen be the self-same one
That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes
As love shall doubt not then to recognise,
And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time
past
Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense
None other than we knew, for evidence
That love's last mortal word was not his last.

A STUDY FROM MEMORY

If that be yet a living soul which here
Seemed brighter for the growth of numbered
springs
And clothed by Time and Pain with goodlier
things
Each year it saw fulfilled a fresh fleet year,
Death can have changed not aught that made it
dear ;
Half humorous goodness, grave-eyed mirth on
wings
Bright-balanced, blither-voiced than quiring
strings ;
Most radiant patience, crowned with conquering
cheer ;
A spirit inviolable that smiled and sang
By might of nature and heroic need
More sweet and strong than loftiest dream or
deed ;
A song that shone, a light whence music rang
High as the sunniest heights of kindest thought ;
All these must be, or all she was be nought.

TO DR. JOHN BROWN

BEYOND the north wind lay the land of old
 Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed
 and fed
 With joy's bright raiment and with love's sweet
 bread,
 The whitest flock of earth's maternal fold.
 None there might wear about his brows enrolled
 A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,
 Whose lovesome love of children and the dead
 All men give thanks for : I far off behold
 A dear dead hand that links us, and a light
 The blindest and benigneſt of the night,
 The night of death's sweet sleep, wherein may be
 A star to show your spirit in present sight
 Some happier island in the Elysian sea
 Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.

March 1882.

TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

THE larks are loud above our leagues of whin
 Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold
 With odour like the colour : all the wold
 Is only light and song and wind wherein
 These twain are blent in one with shining din.
 And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,
 Dear old fast friend whose honours grow not old,
 Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.
 Though all but we from life be now gone forth
 Of that bright household in our joyous north
 Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,
 First met your hand ; yet under life's clear dome,
 Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,
 Shines no less bright his full-sheaved harvest-
 home.

April 20, 1882.

A DEATH ON EASTER DAY

THE strong spring sun rejoicingly may rise,
 Rise and make revel, as of old men said,
 Like dancing hearts of lovers newly wed :
 A light more bright than ever bathed the skies
 Departs for all time out of all men's eyes.
 The crowns that girt last night a living head
 Shine only now, though deathless, on the dead :
 Art that mocks death, and Song that never dies.
 Albeit the bright sweet mothlike wings be furled,
 Hope sees, past all division and defection,
 And higher than swims the mist of human
 breath,
 The soul most radiant once in all the world
 Requicken'd to regenerate resurrection
 Out of the likeness of the shadow of death.

April 1882.

ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND GEORGE ELIOT

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
 Pass, followed one with love and each with
 wonder :

The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
 Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
 Of darkness and magnificence of night ;

And one whose eye could smite the night in
 sunder,

Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
 And found in love of loving-kindness light.

Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
 Still following Righteousness with deep desire

Shone sole and stern before her and above,
 Sure stars and sole to steer by ; but more sweet
 Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,

The light of little children, and their love

AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S REMINISCENCES

I

THREE men lived yet when this dead man was young
 Whose names and words endure for ever : one
 Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the
 sun,
 And his wings weakened, and his angel's tongue
 Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,
 But like the strain half uttered earth hears none,
 Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done :
 One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung
 Between the mountains hallowed by his love
 And the sky stainless as his soul above
 And one the sweetest heart that ever spake
 The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.
 These deathless names by this dead snake defiled
 Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.

II

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,
 Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,
 And for my love's sake, powerless as I am
 For love to praise thee, or like thee to make

Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,
Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.

Things hatefullest thou hadst not heart to damn,
Nor wouldst have set thine heel on this dead snake.
Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,
The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung
Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.

Forgive me, that with bitter words like his
I mix the gentlest English name that is,
The tenderest held of all that know not death.

A LAST LOOK

Sick of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl
 That hoots the sun risen where starlight sank,
 With German garters crossed athwart thy frank
 Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and
 scowl,
 And boys responsive with reverberate howl
 Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank
 And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank
 And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.
 Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given
 Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,
 Son ~~of~~ the storm and darkness, pass in peace.
 Peace upon earth thou knewest not: now, being
 dead,
 Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,
 Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

DICKENS

CHIEF in thy generation born of men
 Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
 With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of
 morn
 For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
 When thoughts of children warmed their light, or
 when
 Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
 Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
 Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live
 pen :
 Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,
 Higher even than here, though highest was here
 thy place,
 Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
 With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne
 And Fielding's kindest might and Goldsmith's
 grace ;
 Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC POETS

I

IF all the flowers of all the fields on earth
 By wonder-working summer were made one,
 Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,
 Its treasure-house of leaves were not more worth
 Than those wherefrom thy light of musing mirth
 Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run
 Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.
 Beloved beyond all names of English birth,
 More dear than mightier memories ; gentlest name
 That ever clothed itself with flower-sweet fame,
 Or linked itself with loftiest names of old
 By right and might of loving ; I, that am
 Less than the least of those within thy fold,
 Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

II

So many a year had borne its own bright bees
 And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,
 John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived
 So well with craft of moulding melodies,

Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease
Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived
Of summer music from the spring derived
When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees.
But thine was not the chance of every day ·

Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,
And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,
Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,
When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey
Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

TO JOHN NICHOL

I

FRIEND of the dead, and friend of all my days;
 Even since they cast off boyhood, I salute
 The song saluting friends whose songs are mute
 With full burnt-offerings of clear-spirited praise.
 That since our old young years our several ways
 Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit,
 Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root
 We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,
 The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,
 Friendship—this only and duly might impel
 My song to salutation of your own;
 More even than praise of one unseen of me
 And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,
 To mine by light and music only known.

II

But more than this what moves me most of all
 To leave not all unworded and unsped
 The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid
 Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should
 fall

His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,
The sign to friends on earth of that dear head
Alive, which now long since untimely dead
The wan grey waters covered for a pall.
Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems
Took never life more taintless of rebuke,
More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,
Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the
Thames,
And made the now more hallowed name of Luke
Memorial to us of mourning left behind.

May 1881

DYSTHANATOS

*Ad generem Cereris sine cade et vulnere pauci
 Descendunt reges, aut sicca morte tyranni.*

By no dry death another king goes down
 The way of kings. Yet may no free man's voice,
 For stern compassion and deep awe, rejoice
 That one sign more is given against the crown,
 That one more head those dark red waters drown
 Which rise round thrones whose trembling equi-
 poise
 Is propped on sand and bloodshed and such toys
 As human hearts that shrink at human frown
 The name writ red on Polish earth, the star
 That was to outshine our England's in the far
 East heaven of empire—where is one that saith
 Proud words now, prophesying of this White Czar?
 "In bloodless pangs few kings yield up their
 breath,
 Few tyrants perish by no violent death."

March 14, 1881

EUONYMOS

εὖ μὴν ἢ τιμὴν ἐδίδου νικηφόρος ἄλκη
 ἐκ νίκης ὄνομ' ἔσχε φόβου κέαρ αἰὲν ἄθικτος.

A YEAR ago red wrath and keen despair
 Spake, and the sole word from their darkness sent
 Laid low the lord not all omnipotent
 Who stood most like a god of all that were
 As gods for pride of power, till fire and air
 Made earth of all his godhead. Lightning rent
 The heart of empire's lurid firmament,
 And laid the mortal core of manhood bare.
 But when the calm crowned head that all revere
 For valour higher than that which casts out fear,
 Since fear came near it never, comes near death,
 Blind murder cowers before it, knowing that here
 No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath
 Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

March 8, 1882.

ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

O SON of man, by lying tongues adored,
 By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod
 In carnage deep as ever Christian trod
 Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred
 And incense from the trembling tyrant's horde,
 Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,
 Most murderous even of all that call thee God,
 Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord;
 Face loved of little children long ago,
 Head hated of the priests and rulers then,
 If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine
 Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,
 Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow
 In death's worst hour the works of **Christian men** ?

January 23, 1882.

BISMARCK AT CANOSSA

Nor all disgraced, in that Italian town,
 The imperial German cowered beneath thine hand,
 Alone indeed imperial Hildebrand,
 And felt thy foot and Rome's, and felt her frown
 And thine, more strong and sovereign than his crown,
 Though iron forged its blood-encrusted band.
 But now the princely wielder of his land,
 For hatred's sake toward freedom, so bows down,
 No strength is in the foot to spurn : its tread
 Can bruise not now the proud submitted head :
 But how much more abased, much lower brought
 low,
 And more intolerably humiliated,
 The neck submissive of the prosperous foe,
 Than his whom scorn saw shuddering in the snow !

December 31, 1881.

QUIA NOMINOR LEO

I

WHAT part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,
 Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope
 And compass of thine homicidal hope
 The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast
 Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,
 From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,
 All servile ; earth for footcloth of the pope,
 And heaven for chancel-ceiling of the priest ;
 Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,
 Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,
 And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell ;
 Heaven laughs with all his light and might above
 That earth has cast thee out of faith and love ;
 Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

II

The light of life has faded from thy cause,
 High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory :
 Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,
 But the red prey was rent out of thy paws

Long since : and they that dying brake down thy laws
Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory
Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary
High altars, waning with the world's applause.
This Italy was Dante's : Bruno died
Here : Campanella, too sublime for pride,
Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.
And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink
For thy sake downward? What art thou, to think
Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome?

January 1882.

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

Not for less love, all glorious France, to thee,
 "Sweet enemy" called in days long since at end,
 Now found and hailed of England sweeter friend,
 Bright sister of our freedom now, being free;
 Not for less love or faith in friendship we
 Whose love burnt ever toward thee reprehend
 The vile vain greed whose pury dreams portend
 Between our shores suppression of the sea.
 Not by dull toil of blind mechanic art
 Shall these be linked for no man's force to part
 Nor length of years and changes to divide,
 But union only of trust and loving heart
 And perfect faith in freedom strong to abide
 And spirit at one with spirit on either side.

April 3, 1882.

SIR WILLIAM GOMM

I

AT threescore years and five aroused anew
 To rule in India, forth a soldier went
 On whose bright-fronted youth fierce war had spent
 Its iron stress of storm, till glory grew
 Full as the red sun waned on Waterloo.
 Landing, he met the word from England sent
 Which bade him yield up rule : and he, content,
 Resigned it, as a mightier warrior's due ;
 And wrote as one rejoicing to record
 That " from the first " his royal heart was lord
 Of its own pride or pain ; that thought was none
 Therein save this, that in her perilous strait
 England, whose womb brings forth her sons so great,
 Should choose to serve her first her mightiest son.

II

Glory beyond all flight of warlike fame
 Go with the warrior's memory who preferred
 To praise of men whereby men's hearts are stirred,
 And acclamation of his own proud name

With blare of trumpet-blasts and sound and flame
Of pageant honour, and the titular word
That only wins men worship of the herd,
His country's sovereign good ; who overcame
Pride, wrath, and hope of all high chance on earth,
For this land's love that gave his great heart birth.
O nursling of the sea-winds and the sea,
Immortal England, goddess ocean-born,
What shall thy children fear, what strengths not scorn,
While children of such mould are born to thee?

EUTHANATOS

IN MEMORY OF MRS. THELLUSSON

FORTH of our ways and woes,
 Forth of the winds and snows,
 A white soul soaring goes,
 Winged like a dove :
 So sweet, so pure, so clear,
 So heavenly tempered here,
 Love need not hope or fear her changed above :

Ere dawned her day to die,
 So heavenly, that on high
 Change could not glorify
 Nor death refine her :
 Pure gold of perfect love,
 On earth like heaven's own dove,
 She cannot wear, above, a smile diviner.

Her voice in heaven's own quire
 Can sound no heavenlier lyre
 Than here : no purer fire
 Her soul can soar :
 No sweeter stars her eyes
 In unimagined skies
 Beyond our sight can rise than here before.

Hardly long years had shed
Their shadows on her head :
Hardly we think her dead,
 Who hardly thought her
Old : hardly can believe
The grief our hearts receive
And wonder while they grieve, as wrong were wrought
 her.

But though strong grief be strong
No word or thought of wrong
May stain the trembling song,
 Wring the bruised heart,
That sounds or sighs its faint
Low note of love, nor taint
Grief for so sweet a saint, when such depart.

A saint whose perfect soul,
With perfect love for goal,
Faith hardly might control,
 Creeds might not harden :
A flower more splendid far
Than the most radiant star
Seen here of all that are in God's own garden.

Surely the stars we see
Rise and relapse as we,
And change and set, may be
 But shadows too :
But spirits that man's lot
Could neither mar nor spot
Like these false lights are not, being heavenly true.

Not like these dying lights
Of worlds whose glory smites
The passage of the nights
Through heaven's blind prison :
Not like their souls who see,
If thought fly far and free,
No heavenlier heaven to be for souls risen.

A soul wherein love shone
Even like the sun, alone,
With fervour of its own
And splendour fed,
Made by no creeds less kind
Toward souls by none confined,
Could Death's self quench or blind, Love's self were
dead.

February 4, 1881.

FIRST AND LAST

UPON the borderlands of being,
 Where life draws hardly breath
 Between the lights and shadows fleeing
 Fast as a word one saith,
 Two flowers rejoice our eyesight, seeing
 The dawns of birth and death.

Behind the babe his dawn is lying
 Half risen with notes of mirth
 From all the winds about it flying
 Through new-born heaven and earth :
 Before bright age his day for dying
 Dawns equal-eyed with birth.

Equal the dews of even and dawn,
 Equal the sun's eye seen
 A hand's breadth risen and half withdrawn .
 But no bright hour between
 Brings aught so bright by stream or lawn
 To noonday growths of green.

Which flower of life may smell the sweeter
 To love's insensual sense,
 Which fragrance move with offering meeter
 His soothed omnipotence,
 Being chosen as fairer or as fleeter,
 Borne hither or borne hence,

Love's foiled omniscience knows not : this
Were more than all he knows
With all his lore of bale and bliss,
The choice of rose and rose,
One red as lips that touch with his,
One white as moonlit snows.

No hope is half so sweet and good,
No dream of saint or sage
So fair as these are : no dark mood
But these might best assuage ;
The sweet red rose of babyhood,
The white sweet rose of age.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD
 JOHN TRELAWNY

LAST high star of the years whose thunder
 Still men's listening remembrance hears,
 Last light left of our fathers' years,
 Watched with honour and hailed with wonder
 Thee too then have the years borne under,
 Thou too then hast regained thy peers.

Wings that warred with the winds of morning,
 Storm-winds rocking the red great dawn,
 Close at last, and a film is drawn
 Over the eyes of the storm-bird, scorning
 Now no longer the loud wind's warning,
 Waves that threaten or waves that fawn.

Peers were none of thee left us living,
 Peers of theirs we shall see no more.
 Eight years over the full fourscore
 Knew thee : now shalt thou sleep, forgiving
 All griefs past of the wild world's giving,
 Moored at last on the stormless shore.

Worldwide liberty's lifelong lover,
 Lover no less of the strength of song,
 Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong,
 Over thy dust that the dust shall cover
 Comes my song as a bird to hover,
 Borne of its will as of wings along.

Cherished of thee were this brief song's brothers
Now that follows them, cherishing thee.
Over the tides and the tideless sea
Soft as a smile of the earth our mother's
Flies it faster than all those others,
First of the troop at thy tomb to be.

Memories of Greece and the mountain's hollow
Guarded alone of thy loyal sword
Hold thy name for our hearts in ward :
Yet more fain are our hearts to follow
One way now with the southward swallow
Back to the grave of the man their lord.

Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing
Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,
Whose true heart it is now draws near ?
Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering
Darkness and death with the news now nearing—
Shelley, Trelawny rejoins thee here.

ADIEUX À MARIE STUART

I

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought,
 With hopes that rose and fell,
 Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,
 Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,
 Have given you of my life,
 Seeing your brave star burn high between
 Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears
 Long since fell still : so long
 Hardly may hope to last in years
 My song.

But still through strife of time and thought
 Your light on me too fell :
 Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,
 Farewell.

II

There beats no heart on either border
 Wherethrough the north blasts blow
 But keeps your memory as a warder
 His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder
Mine, for whose April age
Blithe midsummer made banquet under
The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather
Strength to ring true .
And air and trees and sun and heather
Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy
Or love or teen,
These they forgot, remembering Mary
The Queen.

III

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours
Whose sires brought forth for you
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,
Adieu

Dead is full many a dead man's name
Who died for you this long
Time past : shall this too fare the same,
My song ?

But surely, though it die or live,
Your face was worth
All that a man may think to give
On earth.

No darkness cast of years between
Can darken you :
Man's love will never bid my queen
Adieu.

IV

Love hangs like light about your name
As music round the shell :
No heart can take of you a tame
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,
Ill gifts were yours for giving :
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen
When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,
The whole world's crowning jewel !
Was ever heart so deadly dear
So cruel ?

Yet none for you of all that bled
Grudged once one drop that fell :
Not one to life reluctant said
Farewell.

V

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,
Who mock with praise your name,
To leave a head so rare and royal
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,
You had nor sense nor sting :
In God's name, then, what plague befell us
To fight for such a thing ?

“Some faults the gods will give,” to fetter
Man’s highest intent :
But surely you were something better
Than innocent !

No maid that strays with steps unwary
Through snares unseen,
But one to live and die for ; Mary,
The Queen.

VI

Forgive them all their praise, who blot
Your fame with praise of you :
Then love may say, and falter not,
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive
Who did you much less wrong
Once : but resentment should not live
Too long.

They never saw your lip’s bright bow,
Your swordbright eyes,
The bluest of heavenly things below
The skies.

Clear eyes that love’s self finds most like
A swordblade’s blue,
A swordblade’s ever keen to strike,
Adieu.

VII

Though all things breathe or sound of fight
That yet make up your spell,
To bid you were to bid the light
Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being
A star whose race is run :
Farewell the soul says never, seeing
The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,
The song must say but so
That took your praise up twenty years
Ago

More bright than stars or moons that vary,
Sun kindling heaven and hell,
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,
Farewell.

HERSE

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold
 A child some sweet months old,
 Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
 Smiling, with bated breath,
 Hush ! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
 And heaven's own heart how near !
 How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
 Gaze on this verier one ?
 Heart, hold thy peace ; eyes, be cast down for
 shame ;
 Lips, breathe not yet its name.
 In heaven they know what name to call it ; we,
 How should we know ? For, see !
 The adorable sweet living marvellous
 Strange light that lightens us
 Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
 Full in a babe's warm face !
 All roses that the morning rears are nought,
 All stars not worth a thought,
 Set this one star against them, or suppose
 As rival this one rose.
 What price could pay with earth's whole weight of
 gold
 One least flushed roseleaf's fold
 Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
 From each warm curve and line,

Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillumine
The dappled rose-red bloom
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and colour that the sky
Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
He saw that it was good?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
Its mild miraculous eyes
Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,
What may be said of men?
What speech may name a new-born child? what
word
Earth ever spake or heard?
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
Came forth in blameless bloom
We have no word, as had those men most high,
To call a baby by

Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—

A better word than these,

A better sign it was than flower or gem

That love revealed to them :

They knew that whence comes light or quickening
flame,

Thence only this thing came,

And only might be likened of our love

To somewhat born above,

Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,

Only to dew's own birth.

Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true;

Babe, when we gaze on you,

A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are

More bright than sun or star,

As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,

Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,

And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.

O child, what news from heaven?

TWINS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO W. M. R. AND L. R.

APRIL, on whose wings
 Ride all gracious things,
 Like the star that brings
 All things good to man,
 Ere his light, that yet
 Makes the month shine, set,
 And fair May forget
 Whence her birth began,

Brings, as heart would choose,
 Sound of golden news,
 Bright as kindling dews
 When the dawn begins ;
 Tidings clear as mirth,
 Sweet as air and earth
 Now that hail the birth,
 Twice thus blest, of twins.

In the lovely land
 Where with hand in hand
 Lovers wedded stand
 Other joys before
 Made your mixed life sweet :
 Now, as Time sees meet,
 Three glad blossoms greet
 Two glad blossoms more.

TWINS

Fed with sun and dew,
While your joys were new,
First arose and grew

 One bright olive-shoot :
Then a fair and fine
Slip of warm-haired pine
Felt the sweet sun shine
 On its leaf and fruit.

And it wore for mark
Graven on the dark
Beauty of its bark
 That the noblest name
Worn in song of old
By the king whose bold
Hand had fast in hold
 All the flower of fame.

Then, with southern skies
Flattered in her eyes,
Which, in lovelier wise
 Yet, reflect their blue
Brightened more, being bright
Here with life's delight,
And with love's live light
 Glorified anew,

Came, as fair as came
One who bore her name
(She that broke as flame
 From the swan-shell white),
Crowned with tender hair
Only, but more fair
Than all queens that were

Of your flowers the third
Bud, or new-fledged bird
In your hearts' nest heard
 Murmuring like a dove
Bright as those that drew
Over waves where blew
No loud wind the blue
 Heaven-hued car of love.

Not the glorious grace
Even of that one face
Potent to displace
 All the towers of Troy
Surely shone more clear
Once with childlike cheer
Than this child's face here
 Now with living joy.

After these again
Here in April's train
Breaks the bloom of twain
 Blossoms in one birth
For a crown of May
On the front of day
When he takes his way
 Over heaven and earth.

Half a heavenly thing
Given from heaven to Spring
By the sun her king,
 Half a tender toy,
Seems a child of curl
Yet too soft to twirl ;
Seems the flower-sweet girl
 By the flower-bright boy.

TWINS

All the kind gods' grace,
All their love, embrace
Ever either face,
 Ever brood above them :
All soft wings of hours
Screen them as with flowers
From all beams and showers :
 All life's seasons love them.

When the dews of sleep
Falling lightliest keep
Eyes too close to peep
 Forth and laugh off rest,
Joy from face to feet
Fill them, as is meet :
Life to them be sweet
 As their mother's breast.

When those dews are dry,
And in day's bright eye
Looking full they lie
 Bright as rose and pearl,
All returns of joy
Pure of time's alloy
Bless the rose-red boy,
 Guard the rose-white girl.

POSTSCRIPT

Friends, if I could take
Half a note from Blake
Or but one verse make
 Of the Conqueror's mine, ,

Better than my best
Song above your nest
I would sing : the quest
Now seems too divine.

April 28, 1881.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

If childhood were not in the world,
But only men and women grown ;
No baby-locks in tendrils curled,
No baby-blossoms blown ;

Though men were stronger, women fairer,
And nearer all delights in reach,
And verse and music uttered rarer
Tones of more godlike speech ;

Though the utmost life of life's best hours
Found, as it cannot now find, words ;
Though desert sands were sweet as flower:
And flowers could sing like birds,

But children never heard them, never
They felt a child's foot leap and run
This were a drearier star than ever
Yet looked upon the sun.

SEVEN YEARS OLD

I

SEVEN white roses on one tree,
 Seven white loaves of blameless leaven,
 Seven white sails on one soft sea,
 Seven white swans on one lake's lee,
 Seven white flowerlike stars in heaven,
 All are types unmeet to be
 For a birthday's crown of seven.

II

Not the radiance of the roses,
 Not the blessing of the bread,
 Not the breeze that ere day grows is
 Fresh for sails and swans, and closes
 Wings above the sun's grave spread,
 When the starshine on the snows is
 Sweet as sleep on sorrow shed,

III

Nothing sweetest, nothing best,
 Holds so good and sweet a treasure
 As the love wherewith once blest
 Joy grows holy, grief takes rest,
 Life, half tired with hours to measure,
 Fills his eyes and lips and breast
 With most light and breath of pleasure ;

IV

As the rapture unpolluted,
As the passion undefiled,
By whose force all pains heart-rooted
Are transfigured and transmuted,
Recompensed and reconciled,
Through the imperial, undisputed,
Present godhead of a child.

V

Brown bright eyes and fair bright head,
Worth a worthier crown than this is,
Worth a worthier song instead,
Sweet grave wise round mouth, full fed
With the joy of love, whose bliss is
More than mortal wine and bread,
Lips whose words are sweet as kisses,

VI

Little hands so glad of giving,
Little heart so glad of love,
Little soul so glad of living,
While the strong swift hours are weaving
Light with darkness woven above,
Time for mirth and time for grieving,
Plume of raven and plume of dove,

VII

I can give you but a word
Warm with love therein for leaven,
But a song that falls unheard
Yet on ears of sense unstirred
Yet by song so far from heaven,
Whence you came the brightest bird,
Seven years since, of seven times seven.

EIGHT YEARS OLD

I

SUN, whom the faltering snow-cloud fears,
 Rise, let the time of year be May,
 Speak now the word that April hears,
 Let March have all his royal way ;
 Bid all spring raise in winter's ears
 All tunes her children hear or play,
 Because the crown of eight glad years
 On one bright head is set to-day.

II

What matters cloud or sun to-day
 To him who wears the wreath of years
 So many, and all like flowers at play
 With wind and sunshine, while his ears
 Hear only song on every way ?
 More sweet than spring triumphant hears
 Ring through the revel-rout of May
 Are these, the notes that winter fears.

III

Strong-hearted winter knows and fears
 The music made of love at play,
 Or haply loves the tune he hears
 From hearts fulfilled with flowering May,

Whose molten music thaws his ears
Late frozen, deaf but yesterday
To sounds of dying and dawning years,
Now quickened on his deathward way.

IV

For deathward now lies winter's way
Down the green vestibule of years
That each year brightens day by day
With flower and shower till hope scarce fears
And fear grows wholly hope of May.
But we—the music in our ears
Made of love's pulses as they play
The heart alone that makes it hears.

V

The heart it is that plays and hears
High salutation of to-day.
Tongue falters, hand shrinks back, song fears
Its own unworthiness to play
Fit music for those eight sweet years,
Or sing their blithe accomplished way.
No song quite worth a young child's ears
Broke ever even from birds in May.

VI

There beats not in the heart of May,
When summer hopes and springtide fears,
There falls not from the height of day,
When sunlight speaks and silence hears,

So sweet a psalm as children play
And sing, each hour of all their years,
Each moment of their lovely way,
And know not how it thrills our ears.

VII

Ah child, what are we, that our ears
Should hear you singing on your way,
Should have this happiness? The years
Whose hurrying wings about us play
Are not like yours, whose flower-time fears
Nought worse than sunlit showers in May,
Being sinless as the spring, that hears
Her own heart praise her every day

VIII

Yet we too triumph in the day
That bare, to entrance our eyes and ears,
To lighten daylight, and to play
Such notes as darkness knows and fears,
The child whose face illumines our way,
Whose voice lifts up the heart that hears,
Whose hand is as the hand of May
To bring us flowers from eight full years.

COMPARISONS

CHILD, when they say that others
Have been or are like you,
Babes fit to be your brothers,
Sweet human drops of dew,
Bright fruit of mortal mothers,
What should one say or do?

We know the thought is treason,
We feel the dream absurd ;
A claim rebuked of reason,
That withers at a word :
For never shone the season
That bore so blithe a bird.

Some smiles may seem as merry,
Some glances gleam as wise,
From lips as like a cherry
And scarce less gracious eyes ;
Eyes browner than a berry,
Lips red as morning's rise.

But never yet rang laughter
So sweet in gladdened ears
Through wall and floor and rafter
As all this household hears
And rings response thereafter
Till cloudiest weather clears.

When those your chosen of all men,
Whose honey never cloy,
Two lights whose smiles enthrall men,
Were called at your age boys,
Those mighty men, while small men,
Could make no merrier noise.

Our Shakespeare, surely, daffed not
More lightly pain aside
From radiant lips that quaffed not
Of forethought's tragic tide :
Our Dickens, doubtless, laughed not
More loud with life's first pride.

The dawn were not more cheerless
With neither light nor dew
Than we without the fearless
Clear laugh that thrills us through :
If ever child stood peerless,
Love knows that child is you.

WHAT IS DEATH?

LOOKING on a page where stood
Graven of old on old-world wood
Death, and by the grave's edge grim,
Pale, the young man facing him,
Asked my well-beloved of me
Once what strange thing this might be,
Gaunt and great of limb.

Death, I told him : and, surprise
Deepening more his wildwood eyes
(Like some sweet fleet thing's whose breath
Speaks all spring though nought it saith),
Up he turned his rosebright face
Glorious with its seven years' grace.
Asking—What is death ?

A CHILD'S PITY

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,
 Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears :
 Yet sometime sweeter than their words or smiles
 Are even their tears.

To one for once a piteous tale was read,
 How, when the murderous mother crocodile
 Was slain, her fierce brood famished, and lay dead,
 Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed-beds on the vast grey slime
 Those monsters motherless and helpless lay,
 Perishing only for the parent's crime
 Whose seed were they.

Hours after, toward the dusk, our blithe small bird
 Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,
 Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,
 For pity weeping

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,
 For the poor little crocodiles, he said.
 Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,
 A child's instead.

Feigned tears the false beasts shed for murderous
ends,

We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles :
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's
Outshine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city
Could match the heavenly heart in children here ?
The heart that hallowing all things with its pity
Casts out all fear ?

So lovely, so divine, so dear their laughter
Seems to us, we know not what could be more
dear :

But lovelier yet we see the sign thereafter
Of such a tear.

With sense of love half laughing and half weeping
We met your tears, our small sweet-spirited
friend :

Let your love have us in its heavenly keeping
To life's last end.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

ALL the bells of heaven may ring,
 All the birds of heaven may sing,
 All the wells on earth may spring,
 All the winds on earth may bring
 All sweet sounds together ;
 Sweeter far than all things heard,
 Hand of harper, tone of bird,
 Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
 Welling water's winsome word,
 Wind in warm wan weather,

.One thing yet there is, that none
 Hearing ere its chime be done
 Knows not well the sweetest one
 Heard of man beneath the sun,
 Hoped in heaven hereafter ;
 Soft and strong and loud and light,
 Very sound of very light
 Heard from morning's rosiest height,
 When the soul of all delight
 Fills a child's clear laughter.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

Golden bells of welcome rolled
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold

Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then,
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
Laughs a child of seven.

A CHILD'S THANKS

How low soe'er men rank us,
 How high soe'er we win,
 The children far above us
 Dwell, and they deign to love us,
 With lovelier love than ours,
 And smiles more sweet than flowers ;
 As though the sun should thank us
 For letting light come in.

With too divine complaisance,
 Whose grace misleads them thus,
 Being gods, in heavenly blindness
 They call our worship kindness,
 Our pebble-gift a gem :
 They think us good to them,
 Whose glance, whose breath, whose presence,
 Are gifts too good for us.

The poet high and hoary
 Of meres that mountains bind
 Felt his great heart more often
 Yearn, and its proud strength soften
 From stern to tenderer mood,
 At thought of gratitude
 Shown than of song or story
 He heard of hearts unkind.

A CHILD'S THANKS

But with what words for token
And what adoring tears
Of reverence risen to passion,
In what glad prostrate fashion
Of spirit and soul subdued,
May man show gratitude
For thanks of children spoken
That hover in his ears ?

The angels laugh, your brothers,
Child, hearing you thank me,
With eyes whence night grows sunny,
And touch of lips like honey,
And words like honey-dew :
But how shall I thank you ?
For gifts above all others
What guerdon-gift may be ?

What wealth of words caressing,
What choice of songs found best,
Would seem not as derision,
Found vain beside the vision
And glory from above
Shown in a child's heart's love ?
His part in life is blessing ;
Ours, only to be blest.

A CHILD'S BATTLES

πῶς ἀρετὰν εὐρών.—PINDAR.

PRAISE of the knights of old
 May sleep their tale is told,
 And no man cares :
 The praise which fires our lips is
 A knight's whose fame eclipses
 All of theirs.

The ruddiest light in heaven
 Blazed as his birth-star seven
 Long years ago :
 All glory crown that old year
 Which brought our stout small soldier
 With the snow !

Each baby born has one
 Star, for his friends a sun,
 The first of stars :
 And we, the more we scan it,
 The more grow sure your planet,
 Child, was Mars.

For each one flower, perchance,
 Blooms as his cognizance :
 The snowdrop chill,

The violet un beholden,
For some : for you the golden
Daffodil.

Erect, a fighting flower,
It breasts the breeziest hour
That ever blew.
And bent or broke things brittle
Or frail, unlike a little
Knight like you.

Its flower is firm and fresh
And stout like sturdiest flesh
Of children : all
The strenuous blast that parches
Spring hurts it not till March is
Near his fall.

If winds that prate and fret
Remark, rebuke, regret,
Lament, or blame
The brave plant's martial passion,
It keeps its own free fashion
All the same.

We that would fain seem wise
Assume grave mouths and eyes
Whose looks reprove
Too much delight in battle .
But your great heart our prattle
Cannot move.

We say, small children should
Be placid, mildly good
And blandly meek :

Whereat the broad smile rushes
Full on your lips, and flushes
All your cheek

If all the stars that are
Laughed out, and every star
Could here be heard,
Such peals of golden laughter
We should not hear, as after
Such a word.

For all the storm saith, still,
Stout stands the daffodil.

For all we say,
Howe'er he look demurely,
Our martialist will surely
Have his way.

We may not bind with bands
Those large and liberal hands,
Nor stay from fight,
Nor hold them back from giving :
No lean mean laws of living
Bind a knight.

And always here of old
Such gentle hearts and bold
Our land has bred :
How durst her eye rest else on
The glory shed from Nelson
Quick and dead ?

Shame were it, if but one
Such once were born her son,
That one to have borne,

A CHILD'S BATTLES

And brought him ne'er a brother :
His praise should bring his mother
Shame and scorn.

A child high-souled as he
Whose manhood shook the sea
Smiles haply here :
His face, where love lies basking,
With bright shut mouth seems asking,
What is fear ?

The sunshine-coloured fists
Beyond his dimpling wrists
Were never closed
For saving or for sparing—
For only deeds of daring
Predisposed.

Unclenched, the gracious hands
Let slip their gifts like sands
Made rich with ore
That tongues of beggars ravish
From small stout hands so lavish
Of their store.

Sweet hardy kindly hands
Like these were his that stands
With heel on gorge
Seen trampling down the dragon
On sign or flask or flagon,
Sweet Saint George.

Some tournament, perchance,
Of hands that couch no lance,
Might mark this spot

Your lists, if here some pleasant
Small Guenevere were present,
Launcelot.

My brave bright flower, you need
No foolish song, nor heed
It more than spring
The sighs of winter stricken
Dead when your haunts requicken
Here, my king.

Yet O, how hardly may
The wheels of singing stay
That whirl along
Bright paths whence echo raises
The phantom of your praises,
Child, my song !

Beyond all other things
That give my words fleet wings,
Fleet wings and strong,
You set their jesses ringing
Till hardly can I, singing,
Stint my song

But all things better, friend,
And worse must find an end :
And, right or wrong,
'Tis time, lest rhyme should baffle,
I doubt, to put a snaffle
On my song.

And never may your ear
Aught harsher hear or fear,
Nor wolfish night

A CHILD'S BATTLES

Nor dog-toothed winter snarling
Behind your steps, my darling
My delight !

For all the gifts you give
Me, dear, each day you live,
Of thanks above
All thanks that could be spokén
Take not my song in token,
Take my love.

A CHILD'S FUTURE

WHAT will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be.
 Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea ?
 Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is
 stirred
 Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise
 are heard :
 Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us
 round,
 Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound ;
 Love may forsake us ; yet may not the spirit be bound

Free in oppression of grief as in ardour of joy
 Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a
 toy :
 Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
 Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives .
 Death cannot slay her : she laughs upon death and
 forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star :
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their
 sea :
Fear not at all ; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

SONNETS
ON
ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS
(1590-1650)

I

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

CROWNED, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,
 Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star !
 Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,
 Most far off in the abysm of time, thy lyre
 Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire
 Where all ye sang together, all that are,
 And all the starry songs behind thy car
 Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

“ If all the pens that ever poets held
 Had fed the feeling of their masters’ thoughts,”
 And as with rush of hurtling chariots
 The flight of all their spirits were impelled
 Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,
 Not yet might’st thou be praised enough of men.

II

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Nor if men's tongues and angels' all in one
Spake, might the word be said that might speak
Thee.

Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains,
yea, the sea,

What power is in them all to praise the sun ?
His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.

Man, woman, child, praise God for him ; but he
Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.

He is ; and, being, beholds his work well done.
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his : without him, day were night on earth.

Time knows not his from time's own period.
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires:

All stars are angels ; but the sun is God.

III

BEN JONSON

BROAD-BASED, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
 With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
 Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
 And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
 The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
 Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine
 Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
 • From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,
 High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling
 lights

Hold converse : and the herd of meaner things
 Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
 When 'wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and
 laughed
 Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous
 wings.

IV

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

AN hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,
Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.
Across them and between, a quickening fire,
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,
Fulled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth
With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

V

PHILIP MASSINGER

CLOUDS here and there arisen an hour past noon
 Chequered our English heaven with lengthening
 bars
 And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-
 cars
 Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,
 When the clear still warm concord of thy tune
 Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars
 Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,
 With full mild flame as of the mellowing moon.
 Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face
 High melancholy lights with loftier grace
 Than gilds the brows of revel : sad and wise,
 The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,
 Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,
 Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

VI

JOHN FORD

HEW hard the marble from the mountain's heart
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom
Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art
Carved night, and chiselled shadow : be the tomb
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow
His record of rebellion. Not the day
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,
Touching this marble : darkness, none knows how,
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

VII

JOHN WEBSTER

THUNDER the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.

Night: east, west, south, and northward, very night.

Star upon struggling star strives into sight,

Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.

The very throne of night, her very crown,

A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.

Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height

Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.

Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,

Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time

Shown in the spherul orbit of a glass

Revolving Earth cries out from all her graves.

Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,

Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

VIII

THOMAS DECKER

OUT of the depths of darkling life where sin
Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know
Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe ;
Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in ;
What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,
Winds that blow healing in each note they blow.
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin ?

O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,
Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,
Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,
Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'er more great,
Than thine toward man was more compassionate,
Nor gave Christ praise from lips more sweet with
pity.

IX

THOMAS MIDDLETON

A WILD moon riding high from cloud to cloud,
 That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,
 Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath
 With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud :
 A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,
 With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal
 wreath
 And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath
 Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed :
 A game of close contentious crafts and creeds
 Played till white England bring black Spain to
 " shame :
 A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds
 High conscience lights for mother's love and fame :
 Pure gipsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds :
 Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

X

THOMAS HEYWOOD

Tom, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,
 What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright
 Even yet the laughing and the weeping light
 That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from ?
 Small care was thine to assail and overcome
 Time and his child Oblivion : yet of right
 Thy name has part with names of lordlier might
 For English love and homely sense of home,
 Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bayleaf
 young
 And gives it place aloft among thy peers
 Whence many a wreath once higher strong Time
 has hurled :
 And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's
 tongue—
 “ O good old man, how well in thee appears
 The constant service of the antique world ! ”

XI

GEORGE CHAPMAN

HIGH priest of Homer, not elect in vain,
 Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind
 Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind
 Slow through the labouring triumph of thy train :
 Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,
 Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,
 Tormented and transmuted out of kind :
 But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,
 Like Tailor¹ smooth, like Fisher² swollen, and now
 Grim Yarrington³ scarce bloodier marked than
 thou,
 Then bluff as Mayne's⁴ or broad-mouthed Barry's⁵
 glee ;
 Proud still with hoar predominance of brow
 And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,
 Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

¹ Author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*.

² Author of *Fuzmus Troes, or the True Trojans*.

³ Author of *Two Tragedies in One*

⁴ Author of *The City Match*.

⁵ Author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks*.

XII

JOHN MARSTON

THE bitterness of death and bitterer scorn
Breathes from the broad-leafed aloe-plant whence
thou
Wast fain to gather for thy bended brow
A chaplet by no gentler forehead worn.
Grief deep as hell, wrath hardly to be borne,
Ploughed up thy soul till round the furrowing
plough
The strange black soil foamed, as a black beaked
prow
Bids night-black waves foam where its track has
torn.
Too faint the phrase for thee that only saith
Scorn bitterer than the bitterness of death
Pervades the sullen splendour of thy soul,
Where hate and pain make war on force and fraud
And all the strengths of tyrants ; whence unflawed
It keeps this noble heart of hatred whole.

XIII

JOHN DAY

DAY was a full-blown flower in heaven, alive
With murmuring joy of bees and birds aswarm,
When in the skies of song yet flushed and warm
With music where all passion seems to strive
For utterance, all things bright and fierce to dive
Struggling along the splendour of the storm,
Day for an hour put off his fiery form,
And golden murmurs from a golden hive
Across the strong bright summer wind were heard,
And laughter soft as smiles from girls at play
And loud from lips of boys brow-bound with May
Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,
When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,
Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.

XIV

JAMES SHIRLEY

THE dusk of day's decline was hard on dark
 When evening trembled round thy glowworm lamp
 That shone across her shades and dewy damp
A small clear beacon whose benignant spark
Was gracious yet for loiterers' eyes to mark,
 Though changed the watchword of our English
 camp
 Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion
 ramp,
When thy steed's pace went ambling round Hyde
 Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee
Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,
The blithest throat that ever carolled love
 In music made of morning's merriest heart,
Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above
 And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

XV

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

Songs born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,
 All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,
 Bright from the broad light of its presence, hail !
 Prince Randolph, nighest his throne of all his men,
 Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him
 then

King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail :
 Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,
 Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen :
 Marmion, whose verse keeps always keen and fine
 The perfume of their Apollonian wine

Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee
 The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine :
 Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he
 Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see ?

XVI

ANONYMOUS PLAYS :

“ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM”

MOTHER whose womb brought forth our man of men,
 Mother of Shakespeare, whom all time acclaims
 Queen therefore, sovereign queen of English dames,
 Throned higher than sat thy sonless empress then,
 Was it thy son's young passion-guided pen
 Which drew, reflected from encircling flames,
 A figure marked by the earlier of thy names
 Wife, and from all her wedded kinswomen
 Marked by the sign of murderess ? Pale and great,
 Great in her grief and sin, but in her death
 And anguish of her penitential breath
 Greater than all her sin or sin-born fate,
 She stands, the holocaust of dark desire,
 Clothed round with song for ever as with fire.

XVII

ANONYMOUS PLAYS

Ye too, dim watchfires of some darkling hour,
 Whose fame forlorn time saves not nor proclaims
 For ever, but forgetfulness defames
 And darkness and the shadow of death devour,
 Lift up ye too your light, put forth your power,
 Let the far twilight feel your soft small flames
 And smile, albeit night name not even their names,
 Ghost by ghost passing, flower blown down on flower:
 That sweet-tongued shadow, like a star's that passed
 Singing, and light was from its darkness cast
 To paint the face of Painting fair with praise.¹
 And that wherein forefigured smiles the pure
 Fraternal face of Wordsworth's Elidure
 Between two child-faced masks of merrier days.²

¹ *Doctor Dodypol.*² *Nobody and Somebody.*

XVIII

ANONYMOUS PLAYS

MORE yet and more, and yet we mark not all :
 The Warning fain to bid fair women heed
 Its hard brief note of deadly doom and deed ;¹
 The verse that strewed too thick with flowers the hall
 Whence Nero watched his fiery festival ;²
 That iron page wherein men's eyes who read
 See, bruised and marred between two babes that
 bleed,
 A mad red-handed husband's martyr fall ;³
 The scene which crossed and streaked with mirth the
 strife
 Of Henry with his sons and witchlike wife ;⁴
 And that sweet pageant of the kindly fiend,
 Who, seeing three friends in spirit and heart made
 one,
 Crowned with good hap the true-love wiles he screened
 In the pleached lanes of pleasant Edmonton.⁵

¹ *A Warning for Fair Women.*

² *The Tragedy of Nero.*

³ *A Yorkshire Tragedy.*

⁴ *Look about you.*

⁵ *The Merry Devil of Edmonton.*

XIX

THE MANY

I

GREENE, garlanded with February's few flowers,
 Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage:
 Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age
 Took the mild chaplet woven of honoured hours :
 Nash, laughing hard : Lodge, flushed from lyric
 bowers :
 And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage
 Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page
 Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring
 showers :
 Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves :
 And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse
 Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wildwood hearse :
 Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,
 Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse :
 Live likewise ye Time takes not you for slaves

XX

THE MANY

II

HAUGHTON, whose mirth gave woman all her will :
 Field, bright and loud with laughing flower and
 bird
 And keen alternate notes of laud and gird :
 Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill
 Which tuned the passion of Parthenophil :
 Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word :
 Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred :
 Turk Mason : Brewer, whose tongue drops honey
 still :
 Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand :
 Light Nabbes : lean Sharpham, rank and raw by
 turns,
 But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns :
 Soft Davenport, sad-robed, but blithe and bland :
 Brome, gipsy-led across the woodland ferns :
 Praise be with all, and place among our band.

XXI

EPILOGUE

OUR mother, which wast twice, as history saith,
 Found first among the nations : once, when she
 Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee
 Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare : once,
 when death
 Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at
 Milton's breath :
 More than thy place, then first among the free
 More than that sovereign lordship of the sea
 Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth,
 More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake
 Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,
 More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right
 hand,
 This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong
 That thou wast head of all these streams of song,
 And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.

A DARK MONTH

“La maison sans enfants!”—VICTOR HUGO.

I

A MONTH without sight of the sun
 Rising or reigning or setting
 Through days without use of the day,
 Who calls it the month of May?
 The sense of the name is undone
 And the sound of it fit for forgetting.

We shall not feel if the sun rise,
 We shall not care when it sets :
 If a nightingale make night's air
 As noontide, why should we care ?
 Till a light of delight that is done rise,
 Extinguishing grey regrets ;

Till a child's face lighten again
 On the twilight of older faces ;
 Till a child's voice fall as the dew
 On furrows with heat parched through
 And all but hopeless of grain,
 Refreshing the desolate places—

Fall clear on the ears of us hearkening
 And hungering for food of the sound
 And thirsting for joy of his voice :
 Till the hearts in us hear and rejoice,
 And the thoughts of them doubting and
 darkening
 Rejoice with a glad thing found.

When the heart of our gladness is gone,
What comfort is left with us after ?
When the light of our eyes is away,
What glory remains upon May,
What blessing of song is thereon
If we drink not the light of his laughter ?

No small sweet face with the daytime
To welcome, warmer than noon !
No sweet small voice as a bird's
To bring us the day's first words !
Mid May for us here is not Maytime :
No summer begins with June.

A whole dead month in the dark,
A dawn in the mists that o'ercome her
Stifled and smothered and sad—
Swift speed to it, barren and bad !
And return to us, voice of the lark,
And remain with us, sunlight of summer.

II

ALAS, what right has the dawn to glimmer,
What right has the wind to do aught but
moan?

All the day should be dimmer
Because we are left alone.

Yestermorn like a sunbeam present
Hither and thither a light step smiled,
And made each place for us pleasant
With the sense or the sight of a child.

But the leaves persist as before, and after
Our parting the dull day still bears flowers;
And songs less bright than his laughter
Deride us from birds in the bowers.

Birds, and blossoms, and sunlight only,
As though such folly sufficed for spring!
As though the house were not lonely
For want of the child its king!

III

ASLEEP and afar to-night my darling
Lies, and heeds not the night,
If winds be stirring or storms be snarling
For his sleep is its own sweet light.

I sit where he sat beside me quaffing
The wine of story and song
Poured forth of immortal cups, and laughing
When mirth in the draught grew strong.

I broke the gold of the words, to melt it
For hands but seven years old,
And they caught the tale as a bird, and felt it
More bright than visible gold.

And he drank down deep, with his eyes broad
beaming,
Here in this room where I am,
The golden vintage of Shakespeare, gleaming
In the silver vessels of Lamb.

Here by my hearth where he was I listen
For the shade of the sound of a word,
Athirst for the birdlike eyes to glisten,
For the tongue to chirp like a bird.

At the blast of battle, how broad they brightened,
Like fire in the spheres of stars,
And clung to the pictured page, and lightened
As keen as the heart of Mars !

At the touch of laughter, how swift it twittered
The shrillest music on earth ;
How the lithe limbs laughed and the whole child
glittered
With radiant riot of mirth !

Our Shakespeare now, as a man dumb-stricken,
Stands silent there on the shelf :
And my thoughts, that had song in the heart of
them, sicken,
And relish not Shakespeare's self.

And my mood grows moodier than Hamlet's even,
And man delights not me,
But only the face that morn and even
My heart leapt only to see.

That my heart made merry within me seeing,
And sang as his laugh kept time :
But song finds now no pleasure in being,
And love no reason in rhyme.

IV

MILD May-blossom and proud sweet bay-flower,
What, for shame, would you have with us here?
It is not the month of the May-flower
This, but the fall of the year.

Flowers open only their lips in derision,
Leaves are as fingers that point in scorn ·
The shows we see are a vision ;
Spring is not verily born.

Yet boughs turn supple and buds grow sappy,
As though the sun were indeed the sun :
And all our woods are happy
With all their birds save one.

But spring is over, but summer is over,
But autumn is over, and winter stands
With his feet sunk deep in the clover
And cowslips cold in his hands.

His hoar grim head has a hawthorn bonnet,
His gnarled gaunt hand has a gay green staff
With new-blown rose-blossom on it :
But his laugh is a dead man's laugh.

The laugh of spring that the heart seeks after,
The hand that the whole world yearns to kiss,
It rings not here in his laughter,
The sign of it is not this.

There is not strength in it left to splinter
Tall oaks, nor frost in his breath to sting :
Yet it is but a breath as of winter,
And it is not the hand of spring.

V

THIRTY-ONE pale maidens, clad
All in mourning dresses,
Pass, with lips and eyes more sad
That it seems they should be glad,
Heads discrowned of crowns they had,
Grey for golden tresses.

Grey their girdles too for green,
And their veils dishevelled :
None would say, to see their mien,
That the least of these had been
Born no baser than a queen,
Reared where flower-fays revelled.

Dreams that strive to seem awake,
Ghosts that walk by daytime,
Weary winds the way they take,
Since, for one child's absent sake,
May knows well, whate'er things make
Sport, it is not Maytime.

VI

A HAND at the door taps light
As the hand of my heart's delight :
It is but a full-grown hand,
Yet the stroke of it seems to start
Hope like a bird in my heart,
Too feeble to soar or to stand.

To start light hope from her cover
Is to raise but a kite for a plover
If her wings be not fledged to soar.
Desire, but in dreams, cannot ope
The door that was shut upon hope
When love went out at the door.

Well were it if vision could keep
The lids of desire as in sleep
Fast locked, and over his eyes
A dream with the dark soft key
In her hand might hover, and be
Their keeper till morning rise ;

The morning that brings after many
Days fled with no light upon any
The small face back which is gone ;
When the loved little hands once more
Shall struggle and strain at the door
They beat their summons upon.

VII

If a soul for but seven days were cast out of heaven
and its mirth,
They would seem to her fears like as seventy years
upon earth.

Even and morrow should seem to her sorrow as long
As the passage of numberless ages in slumberless
song.

Dawn, roused by the lark, would be surely as dark in
her sight
As her measureless measure of shadowless pleasure
was bright.

Noon, gilt but with glory of gold, would be hoary
and grey
In her eyes that had gazed on the depths, unamazed
with the day.

Night hardly would seem to make darker her dream
never done,
When it could but withhold what a man may behold
of the sun.

For dreams would perplex, were the days that should
vex her but seven,
The sight of her vision, made dark with division from
heaven.

Till the light on my lonely way lighten that only now
gleams,
I too am divided from heaven and derided of dreams.

VIII

A TWILIGHT fire-fly may suggest
How flames the fire that feeds the sun :
“ A crooked figure may attest
In little space a million ”

But this faint-figured verse, that dresses
With flowers the bones of one bare month,
Of all it would say scarce expresses
In crooked ways a millionth.

A fire-fly tenders to the father
Of fires a tribute something worth :
My verse, a shard-borne beetle rather,
Drones over scarce-illuminated earth.

Some inches round me though it brighten
With light of music-making thought,
The dark indeed it may not lighten,
The silence moves not, hearing nought.

Only my heart is eased with hearing,
Only mine eyes are soothed with seeing,
A face brought nigh, a footfall nearing,
Till hopes take form and dreams have being.

IX

As a poor man hungering stands with insatiate eyes
and hands

Void of bread

Right in sight of men that feast while his famine with
no least

Crumb is fed,

Here across the garden-wall can I hear strange chil-
dren call,

Watch them play,

From the windowed seat above, whence the goodlier
child I love

Is away.

Here the sights we saw together moved his fancy like
a feather

To and fro,

Now to wonder, and thereafter to the sunny storm of
laughter

Loud and low—

Sights engraven on storied pages where man's tale of
seven swift ages

All was told—

Seen of eyes yet bright from heaven—for the lips that
laughed were seven

Sweet years old.

X

Why should May remember
March, if March forget
The days that began with December
The nights that a frost could fret ?

All their griefs are done with
Now the bright months bless
Fit souls to rejoice in the sun with,
Fit heads for the wind's caress ;

Souls of children quickening
With the whole world's mirth,
Heads closelier than field-flowers thickening
That crowd and illuminate earth,

Now that May's call musters
Files of baby bands
To marshal in joyfuller clusters
Than the flowers that encumber their hands.

Yet morose November
Found them no less gay,
With nought to forget or remember
Less bright than a branch of may.

All the seasons moving
Move their minds alike
Applauding, acclaiming, approving
All hours of the year that strike.

So my heart may fret not,
Wondering if my friend
Remember me not or forget not
Or ever the month find end.

Not that love sows lighter
Seed in children sown,
But that life being lit in them brighter
Moves fleeter than even our own.

May nor yet September
Binds their hearts, that yet
Remember, forget, and remember,
Forget, and recall, and forget.

XI

As light on a lake's face moving
Between a cloud and a cloud
Till night reclaim it, reproving
The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices
When soft it swims into sight
Applauded of all the voices
And stars of the windy night.

So brief and unsure, but sweeter
Than ever a moondawn smiled,
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,
The song in the soul of a child ;

The song that the sweet soul singing
Half listens, and hardly hears,
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing
And brighter than joy's own tears ;

The song that remembrance of pleasure
Begins, and forgetfulness ends
With a soft swift change in the measure
That rings in remembrance of friends

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,
So haply may gleam at whites
A dream through the dear deep lashes
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him
May take for a moment part
With angels around and above him,
And I find place in his heart.

XII

CHILD, were you kinless and lonely—
Dear, were you kin to me—
My love were compassionate only
Or such as it needs would be.

But eyes of father and mother
Like sunlight shed on you shine :
What need you have heed of another
Such new strange love as is mine?

It is not meet if unruly
Hands take of the children's bread
And cast it to dogs ; but truly
The dogs after all would be fed.

On crumbs from the children's table
That crumble, dropped from above,
My heart feeds, fed with unstable
Loose waifs of a child's light love.

Though love in your heart were brittle
As glass that breaks with a touch,
You haply would lend him a little
Who surely would give you much.

XIII

HERE is a rough
Rude sketch of my friend,
Faint-coloured enough
And unworthily penned.

Fearlessly fair
And triumphant he stands,
And holds unaware
Friends' hearts in his hands ;

Stalwart and straight
As an oak that should bring
Forth gallant and great
Fresh roses in spring.

On the paths of his pleasure
All graces that wait
What metre shall measure
What rhyme shall relate

Each action, each motion,
Each feature, each limb,
Demands a devotion
In honour of him :

Head that the hand
Of a god might have blest,
Laid lustrous and bland
On the curve of its crest :

Mouth sweeter than cherries,
Keen eyes as of Mars,
Browner than berries
And brighter than stars.

Nor colour nor wordy
Weak song can declare
The stature how sturdy,
How stalwart his air.

As a king in his bright
Presence-chamber may be,
So seems he in height—
Twice higher than your knee.

As a warrior sedate
With reserve of his power,
So seems he in state—
As tall as a flower :

As a rose overtowering
The ranks of the rest
That beneath it lie cowering,
Less bright than their best.

And his hands are as sunny
As ruddy ripe corn
Or the browner-hued honey
From heather-bells borne.

When summer sits proudest,
Fulfilled with its mirth,
And rapture is loudest
In air and on earth,

The suns of all hours
That have ripened the roots
Bring forth not such flowers
And beget not such fruits.

And well though I know it,
As fain would I write,
Child, never a poet
Could praise you aright.

I bless you ? the blessing
Were less than a jest
Too poor for expressing ;
I come to be blest,

With humble and dutiful
Heart, from above :
Bless me, O my beautiful
Innocent love !

This rhyme in your praise
With a smile was begun ;
But the goal of his ways
Is uncovered to none,

Nor pervious till after
The limit impend ;
It is not in laughter
These rhymes of you end.

XIV

SPRING, and fall, and summer, and winter,
Which may Earth love least of them all,
Whose arms embrace as their signs imprint her,
Summer, or winter, or spring, or fall ?

The clear-eyed spring with the wood-birds mating,
The rose-red summer with eyes aglow,
The yellow fall with serene eyes waiting,
The wild-eyed winter with hair all snow ?

Spring's eyes are soft, but if frosts benumb her
As winter's own will her shrewd breath sting :
Storms may rend the raiment of summer,
And fall grow bitter as harsh-lipped spring.

One sign for summer and winter guides me,
One for spring, and the like for fall :
Whichever from sight of my friend divides me,
That is the worst ill season of all.

XV

WORSE than winter is spring
If I come not to sight of my king :
But then what a spring will it be
When my king takes homage of me !

I send his grace from afar
Homage, as though to a star ;
As a shepherd whose flock takes flight
May worship a star by night.

As a flock that a wolf is upon
My songs take flight and are gone :
No heart is in any to sing
Aught but the praise of my king.

Fain would I once and again
Sing deeds and passions of men :
But ever a child's head gleams
Between my work and my dreams.

Between my hand and my eyes
The lines of a small face rise,
And the lines I trace and retrace
Are none but those of the face.

XVI

TILL the tale of all this flock of days alike
 All be done,
Weary days of waiting till the month's hand strike
 Thirty-one,
Till the clock's hand of the month break off, and end
 With the clock,
Till the last and whitest sheep at last be penned
 Of the flock,
I their shepherd keep the count of night and day
 With my song,
Though my song be, like this month which once was
 May,
 All too long.

XVII

THE incarnate sun, a tall strong youth,
On old Greek eyes in sculpture smiled :
But trulier had it given the truth
To shape him like a child.

No face full-grown of all our dearest
So lightens all our darkness, none
Most loved of all our hearts hold nearest
To far outshines the sun,

As when with sly shy smiles that feign
Doubt if the hour be clear, the time
Fit to break off my work again
Or sport of prose or rhyme,

My friend peers in on me with merry
Wise face, and though the sky stay dim
The very light of day, the very
Sun's self comes in with him.

XVIII

Out of sight,
Out of mind !
Could the light
Prove unkind ?

Can the sun
Quite forget
What was done
Ere he set ?

Does the moon
When she wanes
Leave no tune
That remains

In the void
Shell of night
Overcloyed
With her light ?

Must the shore
At low tide
Feel no more
Hope or pride,

No intense
Joy to be,
In the sense
Of the sea—

In the pulses
Of her shocks
It repulses,
When its rocks

Thrill and ring
As with glee ?
Has my king
Cast off me,

Whom no bird
Flying south
Brings one word
From his mouth ?

Not the ghost
Of a word
Riding post
Have I heard,

Since the day
When my king
Took away
With him spring,

And the cup
Of each flower
Shrivalled up
That same hour,

With no light
Left behind.
Out of sight,
Out of mind !

XIX

BECAUSE I adore you
And fall
On the knees of my spirit before you—
After all,

You need not insult,
My king,
With neglect, though your spirit exult
In the spring,

Even me, though not worth,
God knows,
One word of you sent me in mirth,
Or one rose

Out of all in your garden
That grow
Where the frost and the wind never harden
Flakes of snow,

Nor ever is rain
At all,
But the roses rejoice to remain
Fair and tall—

The roses of love,
More sweet
Than blossoms that rain from above
Round our feet,

When under high bowers
We pass,
Where the west wind freckles with flowers
All the grass.

But a child's thoughts bear
More bright
Sweet visions by day, and more fair
Dreams by night,

Than summer's whole treasure
Can be :
What am I that his thought should take pleasure,
Then, in me ?

I am only my love's
True lover,
With a nestful of songs, like doves
Under cover,

That I bring in my cap
Fresh caught,
To be laid on my small king's lap—
Worth just nought.

Yet it haply may hap
That he,
When the mirth in his veins is as sap
In a tree,

Will remember me too
Some day
Ere the transit be thoroughly through
Of this May—

Or perchance, if such grace
May be,
Some night when I dream of his face,
Dream of me.

Or if this be too high
A hope
For me to prefigure in my
Horoscope,

He may dream of the place
Where we
Basked once in the light of his face,
Who now see

Nought brighter, not one
Thing bright,
Than the stars and the moon and the sun,
Day nor night.

XX

DAY by darkling day,
Overpassing, bears away
Somewhat of the burden of this weary May.

Night by numbered night,
Waning, brings more near in sight
Hope that grows to vision of my heart's delight.

Nearer seems to burn
In the dawn's rekindling urn
Flame of fragrant incense, hailing his return.

Louder seems each bird
In the brightening branches heard
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

All the mists that swim
Round the dawns that grow less dim
Still wax brighter and more bright with hope of him.

All the suns that rise
Bring that day more near our eyes
When the sight of him shall clear our clouded skies.

All the winds that roam
Fruitful fields or fruitless foam
Blow the bright hour near that brings his bright face
home.

XXI

I HEAR of two far hence
In a garden met,
And the fragrance blown from thence
Fades not yet.

The one is seven years old,
And my friend is he :
But the years of the other have told
Eighty-three.

To hear these twain converse
Or to see them greet
Were sweeter than softest verse
May be sweet.

The hoar old gardener there
With an eye more mild
Perchance than his mild white hair
Meets the child.

I had rather hear the words
That the twain exchange
Than the songs of all the birds
There that range,

Call, chirp, and twitter there
Through the garden-beds
Where the sun alike sees fair
Those two heads,

And which may holier be
Held in heaven of those
Or more worth heart's thanks to see
No man knows.

XXII

OF such is the kingdom of heaven,
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
So clear a Paradise

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed .
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed.

XXIII

THE wind on the downs is bright
As though from the sea :
And morning and night
Take comfort again with me.

He is nearer to-day,
Each night to each morning saith,
Whose return shall revive dead May
With the balm of his breath.

The sunset says to the moon,
He is nearer to-night
Whose coming in June
Is looked for more than the light.

Bird answers to bird,
Hour passes the sign on to hour,
And for joy of the bright news heard
Flower murmurs to flower.

The ways that were glad of his feet
In the woods that he knew
Grow softer to meet
The sense of his footfall anew.

He is near now as day,
Says hope to the new-born light :
He is near now as June is to May,
Says love to the night.

XXIV

Good things I keep to console me
For lack of the best of all,
A child to command and control me,
Bid come and remain at his call.

Sun, wind, and woodland and highland,
Give all that ever they gave .
But my world is a cultureless island,
My spirit a masterless slave.

And friends are about me, and better
At summons of no man stand :
But I pine for the touch of a fetter,
The curb of a strong king's hand.

Each hour of the day in her season
Is mine to be served as I will :
And for no more exquisite reason
Are all served idly and ill.

By slavery my sense is corrupted,
My soul not fit to be free :
I would fain be controlled, interrupted,
Compelled as a thrall may be.

For fault of spur and of bridle
I tire of my stall to death :
My sail flaps joyless and idle
For want of a small child's breath.

XXV

WHITER and whiter
The dark lines grow,
And broader opens and brighter
The sense of the text below.

Nightfall and morrow
Bring nigher the boy
Whom wanting we want not sorrow,
Whom having we want no joy.

Clearer and clearer
The sweet sense grows
Of the word which hath summer for hearer,
The word on the lips of the rose.

Duskily dwindles
Each deathlike day,
Till June rearising rekindles
The depth of the darkness of May.

XXVI

“In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.”

STARS in heaven are many,
Suns in heaven but one :
Nor for man may any
Star supplant the sun.

Many a child as joyous
As our far-off king
Meets as though to annoy us
In the paths of spring.

Sure as spring gives warning,
All things dance in tune :
Sun on Easter morning,
Cloud and windy moon,

Stars between the tossing
Boughs of tuneful trees,
Sails of ships recrossing
Leagues of dancing seas ;

Best, in all this playtime,
Best of all in tune,
Girls more glad than Maytime,
Boys more bright than June ;

Mixed with all those dances,
Far through field and street
Sing their silent glances,
Ring their radiant feet.

Flowers wherewith May crowned us
Fall ere June be crowned .
Children blossom round us
All the whole year round.

Is the garland worthless
For one rose the less,
And the feast made mirthless ?
Love, at least, says yes.

Strange it were, with many
Stars enkindling air,
Should but one find any
Welcome : strange it were,

Had one star alone won
Praise for light from far :
Nay, love needs his own one
Bright particular star.

Hope and recollection
Only lead him right
In its bright reflection
And collateral light.

Find as yet we may not
Comfort in its sphere :
Yet these days will weigh not
When it warms us here ;

When full-orbed it rises,
Now divined afar :
None in all the skies is
Half so good a star ;

None that seers importune
Till a sign be won :
Star of our good fortune,
Rise and reign, our sun !

XXVII

I PASS by the small room now forlorn
Where once each night as I passed I knew
A child's bright sleep from even to morn
Made sweet the whole night through.

As a soundless shell, as a songless nest,
Seems now the room that was radiant then
And fragrant with his happier rest
Than that of slumbering men.

The day therein is less than the day,
The night is indeed night now therein :
Heavier the dark seems there to weigh,
And slower the dawns begin.

As a nest fulfilled with birds, as a shell
Fulfilled with breath of a god's own hymn,
Again shall be this bare blank cell,
Made sweet again with him.

XXVIII

SPRING darkens before us,
A flame going down,
With chant from the chorus
Of days without crown—
Cloud, rain, and sonorous
Soft wind on the down.

She is wearier not of us
Than we of the dream
That spring was to love us
And joy was to gleam
Through the shadows above us
That shift as they stream.

Half dark and half hoary,
Float far on the loud
Mild wind, as a glory
Half pale and half proud
From the twilight of story,
Her tresses of cloud ;

Like phantoms that glimmer
Of glories of old
With ever yet dimmer
Pale circlets of gold
As darkness grows grimmer
And memory more cold.

Like hope growing clearer
With wane of the moon,
Shines toward us the nearer
Gold frontlet of June,
And a face with it dearer
Than midsummer noon.

XXIX

You send me your love in a letter,
I send you my love in a song :
Ah child, your gift is the better,
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,
No praise, were it wide as earth,
Is worth so much as a little
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us
As they might angels above :
Come back to us, child, if you love us,
And bring us your love.

XXX

No time for books or for letters :
What time should there be ?
No room for tasks and their fetters :
Full room to be free.

The wind and the sun and the Maytime
Had never a guest
More worthy the most that his playtime
Could give of its best.

If rain should come on, peradventure,
(But sunshine forbid ')
Vain hope in us haply might venture
To dream as it did.

But never may come, of all comers
Least welcome, the rain,
To mix with his servant the summer's
Rose-garlanded train !

He would write, but his hours are as busy
As bees in the sun,
And the jubilant whirl of their dizzy
Dance never is done.

The message is more than a letter,
Let love understand,
And the thought of his joys even better
Than sight of his hand.

XXXI

WIND, high-souled, full-hearted
South-west wind of the spring !
Ere April and earth had parted,
Skies, bright with thy forward wing,
Grew dark in an hour with the shadow behind it, that
bade not a bird dare sing.

Wind whose feet are sunny,
Wind whose wings are cloud,
With lips more sweet than honey
Still, speak they low or loud,
Rejoice now again in the strength of thine heart · let
the depth of thy soul wax proud.

We hear thee singing or sighing,
Just not given to sight,
All but visibly flying
Between the clouds and the light,
And the light in our hearts is enkindled, the shadow
therein of the clouds put to flight.

From the gift of thine hands we gather
The core of the flowers therein,
Keen glad heart of heather,
Hot sweet heart of whin,
Twin breaths in thy godlike breath close blended of
wild spring's wildest of kin.

All but visibly beating
We feel thy wings in the far
Clear waste, and the plumes of them fleeting,
Soft as swan's plumes are,
And strong as a wild swan's pinions, and swift as the
flash of the flight of a star.

As the flight of a planet enkindled
Seems thy far soft flight
Now May's reign has dwindled
And the crescent of June takes light
And the presence of summer is here, and the hope of
a welcomer presence in sight.

Wind, sweet-souled, great-hearted
Southwest wind on the wold !
From us is a glory departed
That now shall return as of old,
Borne back on thy wings as an eagle's expanding, and
crowned with the sundawn's gold.

There is not a flower but rejoices,
There is not a leaf but has heard :
All the fields find voices,
All the woods are stirred :
There is not a nest but is brighter because of the
coming of one bright bird.

Out of dawn and morning,
Noon and afternoon,
The sun to the world gives warning
Of news that brightens the moon ;
And the stars all night exult with us, hearing of joy
that shall come with June.

SUNRISE

If the wind and the sunlight of April and August had
mingled the past and hereafter
In a single adorable season whose life were a rapture
of love and of laughter,
And the blithest of singers were back with a song ; if
again from his tomb as from prison,
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristophanes had arisen,
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were
also a god upon earth at his shoulders,
And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at
his lips, for a joy to beholders,
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set
to some adequate measure
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores
them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all
of us here, and the season
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and
rejoicing a word without reason.
For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight
as of jubilant voices,
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather
alive as a heart that rejoices.

For the house that was childless awhile, and the light
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with
the light of his face is rekindled.
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the
sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted
in June and by June were defrauded,
And the summer that brought us not back the desire
of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.
For July came joyless among us, and August went
out from us arid and sterile,
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no
more than a flower that the seasons imperil,
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought
which regret had not heart to remember,
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and
summer began in September.
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's
voice hither and thither :
See, May in the garden again with a child's face
cheering the woods ere they wither.
June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the
sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,
And August glows in a smile more sweet than the
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun,
and the noon with delight in him flushes,
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as
soft as the sleep that it hushes.
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift
of the sundawn's giving,

And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds
else in the world of the living,
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in
the world of our visions beholden,
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that
the light of a world without grief makes golden.
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a
likeness of heaven and its glory,
What was it of old, or what is it and will be for ever,
in song or in story,
Or in shape or in colour of carven or painted resemblance,
adored of all ages,
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures
of old or the pages ?
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if
they come not again shall be never :
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of
heaven and its promise for ever.

.

SPECIMENS OF MODERN POETS

THE HEPTALOGIA

OR

THE SEVEN AGAINST SENSE

A CAP WITH SEVEN BELLS

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM IN A NUTSHELL

ONE, who is not, we see · but one, whom we see not,
is :

Surely this is not that : but that is assuredly this.

What, and wherefore, and whence? for under is over
and under .

If thunder could be without lightning, lightning could
be without thunder

Doubt is faith in the main : but faith, on the whole,
is doubt :

We cannot believe by proof : but could we believe
without ?

Why, and whither, and how ? for barley and rye are
not clover ·

Neither are straight lines curves : yet over is under
and over.

Two and two may be four : but four and four are not
eight :

Fate and God may be twain : but God is the same
thing as fate.

Ask a man what he thinks, and get from a man what
he feels :

God, once caught in the fact, shows you a fair pair
of heels.

Body and spirit are twins : God only knows which is
which :

The soul squats down in the flesh, like a tinker drunk
in a ditch.

More is the whole than a part : but half is more than
the whole :

Clearly, the soul is the body : but is not the body the
soul ?

One and two are not one : but one and nothing is
two :

Truth can hardly be false, if falsehood cannot be
true.

Once the mastodon was : pterodactyls were common
as cocks :

Then the mammoth was God : now is He a prize ox.

Parallels all things are : yet many of these are askew
You are certainly I : but certainly I am not you.

Springs the rock from the plain, shoots the stream
from the rock :

Cocks exist for the hen : but hens exist for the cock.

God, whom we see not, is : and God, who is not, we
see :

Fiddle, we know, is diddle : and diddle, we take it,
is dee.

JOHN JONES'S WIFE

I

AT THE PIANO

I

LOVE me and leave me ; what love bids retrieve me ?
can June's fist grasp May ?
Leave me and love me ; hopes eyed once above me
like spring's sprouts decay ;
Fall as the snow falls, when summer leaves grow
false—cards packed for storm's play !

II

Nay, say Decay's self be but last May's elf, wing
shifted, eye sheathed—
Changeling in April's crib rocked, who lets 'scape
rills locked fast since frost breathed—
Skin cast (think !) adder-like, now bloom bursts
bladder-like,—bloom frost bequeathed ?

III

Ah, how can fear sit and hear as love hears it grief's
heart's cracked grate's screech ?
Chance lets the gate sway that opens on hate's way
and shews on shame's beach
Crouched like an imp sly change watch sweet love's
shrimps lie, a toothful in each.

IV

Time feels his tooth slip on husks wet from Truth's
lip, which drops them and grins—
Shells where no throb stirs of life left in lobsters
since joy thrilled their fins—
Hues of the prawn's tail or comb that makes dawn
stale, so red for our sins !

V

Years blind and deaf use the soul's joys as refuse,
heart's peace as manure,
Reared whence, next June's rose shall bloom where
our moons rose last year, just as pure :
Moons' ends match roses' ends : men by beasts'
noses' ends mete sin's stink's cure.

VI

Leaves love last year smelt now feel dead love's tears
melt—flies caught in time's mesh !
Salt are the dewes in which new time breeds new sin,
brews blood and stews flesh ;
Next year may see dead more germs than this weeded
and reared them afresh.

VII

Old times left perish, there's new time to cherish ;
life just shifts its tune ;
As, when the day dies, earth, half afraid, eyes the
growth of the moon ;
Love me and save me, take me or waive me ; death
takes one so soon !

II

BY THE CLIFF

I

Is it daytime (guess),
You that feed my soul
To excess
With that light in those eyes
And those curls drawn like a scroll
In that round grave guise?
No or yes?

II

Oh, the end, I'd say !
Such a foolish thing
(Pure girls' play !)
As a mere mute heart,
Was it worth a kiss, a ring,
This ? for two must part—
Not to-day.

III

Look, the whole sand crawls,
Hums, a heaving hive,
Scrapes and scrawls—

Such a buzz and burst !
Here just one thing's not alive,
One that was at first—
But life palls.

IV

Yes, my heart, I know,
Just my heart's tone dead—
Yes, just so.
Sick with heat, those worms
Drop down scorched and overfed—
No more need of germs !
Let them go.

V

Yes, but you now, look,
You, the rouged stage female
With a crook,
Chalked Arcadian sham,
You that made my soul's sleep's dream
ail—
Your soul fit to damn ?
Shut the book.

III

ON THE SANDS

I

THERE was nothing at all in the case (conceive)
But love ; being love, it was not (understand)
Such a thing as the years let fall (believe)
Like the rope's coil dropt from a fisherman's hand
When the boat's hauled up—"by your leave !"

II

So—well ! How that crab writhes--leg after leg
Drawn, as a worm draws ring upon ring
Gradually, not gladly ! Chicken or egg,
Is it more than the ransom (say) of a king
(Take my meaning at least) that I beg ?

III

Not so ! You were ready to learn, I think,
What the world said ! "He loves you too well
(suppose)
For such leanings ! These poets, their love's mere
ink—
Like a flower, their flame flashes—a rosebud,
blows—
Then it all drops down at a wink !

IV

“ Ah, the instance ! A curl of a blossomless vine
The vinedresser passing it sickens to see
And mutters ‘ Much hope (under God) of His wine
From the branch and the bark of a barren tree
Spring reared not, and winter lets pine—

V

“ ‘ His wine that should glorify (saith He) the cup
That a man beholding (not tasting) might say .
“ Pour out life at a draught, drain it dry, drink it up,
Give this one thing, and huddle the rest away—
Save the bitch, and be hanged to the pup ! ”

VI

“ ‘ Let it rot then ! ’ which saying, he leaves it—we’ll
guess,
Feels (if the sap move at all) thus much—
Yearns, and would blossom, would quicken no less,
Bud at an eye’s glance, flower at a touch—
‘ Die, perhaps, would you not, for her ? ’—‘ Yes ! ’

VII

“ Note the hitch there ! That’s piteous—so much
being done,
(He’ll think some day, your lover) so little to do !
Such infinite days to wear out, once begun !
Since the hand its glove holds, and the footsole its
shoe—
Overhead too there’s always the sun ! ”

VIII

Oh, no doubt they had said so, your friends—been
profuse

Of good counsel, wise hints—“where the trap
lurks, walk warily—

Squeeze the fruit to the core ere you count on the
.juice!

För the graft may fail, shift, wax, change colour,
wane, vary, lie—”

You were cautious, God knows—to what use?

IX

This crab's wiser, it strikes me—no twist but implies
life—

Not a curl but's so fit you could find none fitter—
For the brute from its brutehood looks up thus and
eyes life—

Stoop your soul down and listen, you'll hear it
twitter,

Laughing lightly,—my crab's life's the wise life!

X

Those who've read S. T. Coleridge remember how
Sammy sighs

To his pensive (I think he says) Sara—“most
soothing-sweet”—

Crab's bulk's less (look!) than man's—yet (quoth
Cancer) I am my size,

And my bulk's girth contents me! Man's maw
(see?) craves two things—wheat

And flesh likewise—man's gluttonous—damn his
eyes!

XI

Crab's content with crab's provender : crab's love, if
soothing,
Is no sweeter than pincers are soft—and a new
sickle
Cuts no sharper than crab's claws nip, keen as boar's
toothings !
Yet crab's love's no less fervent than bard's, if less
musical—
'Tis a new thing I'd lilt—but a true thing.

XII

Old songs tell us, of all drinks for Englishmen
fighting, ale's
Out and out best : salt water contents crab, it
seems to me,
Though pugnacious as sailors, and skilled to steer
right in gales
That craze pilots, if slow to sing—" Sleep'st thou?
thou dream'st o' me !"
In such love-strains as mine—or a nightingale's.

XIII

Ah, now, look you—tail foremost, the beast sets sea-
ward—
The sea draws it, sand sucks it—he's wise, my
crab !
From the napkin out jumps his one talent—good
steward,
Just judge ! So a man shirks the smile or the
stab,
And sets his sail duly to leeward !

XIV

Trust me? Hardly ! I bid you not lean (remark)
On my spirit, your spirit—my flesh, your flesh—
Hold my hand, and tread safe through the horrible
dark—
Quench my soul as with sprinklings of snow, then
refresh
With some blast of new bellows the spark !

XV

By no means ! This were easy (men tell me) to
say—
“Give her all, throw your chance up, fall back on
her heart !”
(Say my friends) “she must change ! after night
follows day—”
No such fool ! I am safe set in hell, for my
part—
So let heaven do the worst now he may !

XVI

What they bid me ? Well, this, nothing more—
“Tell her this—
‘You are mine, I yours, though the whole world
fail—
Though things are not, I know there is one thing
which is—
Though the oars break, there’s hope for us yet—
hoist the sail !
Oh, your heart ! what’s the heart ? but your kiss !’

XVII

“Then she breaks, she drops down, she lies flat at
your feet—

Take her then !” Well, I knew it—what fools are
men !

Take the bee by her horns, will your honey prove
sweet ?

Sweet is grass—will you pasture your cows in a
fen ?

Oh, if contraries could but once meet !

XVIII

Love you call it ? Some twitch in the moon's face
(observe),

Wet blink of her eyelid, tear dropt about dewfall,
Cheek flushed or obscured—does it make the sky
swerve ?

Fetch the test, work the question to rags, bring to
proof all—

Find what souls want and bodies deserve !

XIX

Ah, we know you ! Your soul works to infinite
ends,

Frets, uses life up for death's sake, takes pains,
Flings down love's self—“but you, bear me witness,
my friends !

Have I lost spring ? count up (see) the winter's
fresh gains !

Is the shrub spoilt ? the pine's hair impends !”

XX

What, you'd say—"Mark how God works! Years
 crowd, time wears thin,
 Earth keeps good yet, the sun goes on, stars hold
 their own,
 And you'll change, climb past sight of the world, shift
 your skin,
 Never heeding how life moans—"more flesh now,
 less bone!"
 For that cheek's worn waste outline (death's grin)

XXI

"Pleads with time still—"what good if I lose this?
 but see—" "
 (There's the crab gone!) "I said, "Though earth
 sinks,"" (you perceive?
 Ah, true, back there!) your soul now—" "yet some
 vein might be
 (Could one find it alive in the heart's core's pulse,
 cleave
 Through the life-springs where "you" melts in
 "me")—

XXII

" " "Some true vein of the absolute soul, which sur-
 vives
 All that flesh runs to waste through"—and lo, this
 fails!
 Here's death close on us! One life? a million of
 lives!
 Why choose one sail to watch of these infinite
 sails?
 Time's a tennis-play? thank you, no, fives!

XXIII

“ ‘Stop life’s ball then!’ Such folly! melt earth
down for that,
Till the pure ore eludes you and leaves you raw
scoriæ?
Pish, the vein’s wrong!’ But you, friends—come,
what were you at
When God spat you out suddenly? what was the
story He
Cut short thus, the growth He laid flat?

XXIV

Wait! the crab’s twice alive, mark! Oh, worthy,
your soul,
Of strange ends, great results, novel labours!
Take note,
I reject this for one! (ay, now, straight to the hole!
Safe in sand there—your skirts smooth out all as
they float!)

I, shirk drinking through flaws in the bowl?

XXV

Or suppose now that rock’s cleft—grim, scored to the
quick,
As a man’s face kept fighting all life through gets
scored,
Mossed and marked with grey purulent leprosies,
sick,
Flat and foul as man’s life here (be swift with your
sword—
Cut the soul out, stuck fast where thorns prick!)

XXVI

—Say it let the rock's heart out, its meaning, the
thing

All was made for, devised, ruled out gradually,
planned—

Ah, that sea-shell, perhaps—since it lies, such a ring

Of pure colour, a cup full of sunbeams, to stand
(Say, in Lent) at the priest's hand—(no king ')

XXVII

Blame the cleft then? Praise rather! So—just a
chance gone '

Had you said—"Save the seed and secure souls
in flower"—

'Ah, how time laughs, years palpitate, pro grapples
con,

Till one day you shrug shoulders—"Well, gone,
the good hour '"

Till one night—"Is God off now? or on?"

IV

UP THE SPOUT

I

Hi ! Just you drop that ! Stop, I say !

Shirk work, think slink off, twist friend's wrist ?
Where that spined sand's lined band's the bay—

Lined blind with true sea's blue, as due—
Promising—not to pay ?

II

For the sea's debt leaves wet the sand ;

Burst worst fate's weights in one burst gun ?
A man's own yacht, blown—What ? off land ?

Tack back, or veer round here, then—queer !
Reef points, though—understand ?

III

I'm blest if I do. Sigh ? be blowed !

Love's doves make break life's ropes, eh ? Tropes !
Faith's brig, baulked, sides caulked, rides at road ;

Hope's grapes befogged, storm-dogged and
bogged—
Clogged, water-logged, her load !

IV

Stowed, by Jove, right and tight, away !
No show now how best plough sea's brow,
Wrinkling—breeze quick, tease thick, ere day,
Clear sheer wave's sheen of green, I mean,
With twinkling wrinkles—eh ?

V

Sea sprinkles winkles, tinkles light
Shells' bells—boy's joys that hap to snap !
It's just sea's fun, breeze done, to spite
God's rods that scourge her surge, I'd urge—
Not proper, is it—quite ?

VI

See, fore and aft, life's craft undone !
Crank plank, split spritsail—mark, sea's lark !
That grey cold sea's old sprees, begun
When men lay dark i' the ark, no spark,
All water—just God's fun !

VII

Not bright, at best, his jest to these
Seemed—screamed, shrieked, wreaked on kin for
sin !
When for mirth's yell earth's knell seemed please
Some dumb new grim great whim in him
Made Jews take chalk for cheese.

VIII

Could God's rods bruise God's Jews? Their jowls
Bobbed, sobbed, gaped, aped the plaice in face :
None heard, 'tis odds, his—God's—folk's howls.
Now, how must I apply, to try
This hookiest-beaked of owls ?

IX

Well, I suppose God knows—I don't.
Time's crimes mark dark men's types, in stripes .
Broad as fen's lands men's hands were wont
Leave grieve unploughed, though proud and loud
With birds' words—No ! he won't !

X

One never should think good impossible.
Eh ? say I'd hide this Jew's oil's cruse—
His shop might hold bright gold, engrossible
By spy—spring's air takes there no care
To wave the heath-flower's glossy bell !

XI

But gold bells chime in time there, coined—
Gold ! Old Sphinx winks there—"Read my
screed !"
Doctrine Jews learn, use, burn for, joined
(Through new craft's stealth) with health and
wealth—
At once all three purloined !

XII

I rose with dawn, to pawn, no doubt,
 (Miss this chance, glance untried aside?)
John's shirt, my—no ! Ay, so—the lout !
 Let yet the door gape, store on floor
And not a soul about ?

XIII

Such men lay traps, perhaps—and I'm
 Weak—meek—mild—child of woe, you know !
But theft, I doubt, my lout calls crime.
 Shrink ? Think ! Love's dawn in pawn—you
 spawn
Of Jewry ! Just in time !

V

OFF THE PIER

I

ONE last glance at these sands and stones !

Time goes past men, and lives to his liking,
Steals, and ruins, and sometimes atones.

Why should he be king, though, and why not
I king ?

There now, that wind, like a swarm of sick drones !

II

Is it heaven or mere earth (come !) that moves so and
moans ?

Oh, I knew, when you loved me, my soul was in
flowerage—

Now the frost comes ; from prime, though, I watched
through to nones,

Read love's litanies over—his age was not our
age !

No more flutes in this world for me now, dear !
trombones.

III

All that youth once denied and made mouths at, age
owns.

Facts put fangs out and bite us ; life stings and
grows viperous ;

And time's fugues are a hubbub of meaningless tones.

Once we followed the piper ; now why not the piper
us ? .

Love, grown grey, plays mere solos ; we want anti-
phones.

IV

And we sharpen our wits up with passions for hones,
Melt down loadstars for magnets, use women for
whetstones,

Learn to bear with dead calms by remembering
cyclones,

Snap strings short with sharp thumbnails, till
silence begets tones,

Burn our souls out, shift spirits, turn skins and change
zones ;

V

Then the heart, when all's done with, wakes,
whimpers, intones

Some lost fragment of tune it thought sweet ere it
grew sick ;

(Is it life that disclaims this, or death that disowns ?)

Mere dead metal, scrawled bars—ah, one touch,
you make music !

Love's worth saving, youth doubts, but experience
depones.

VI

In the darkness (right Dickens) of Tom-All-Alone's
 Or the Morgue out in Paris, where tragedy
 centuples
 Life's effects by Death's algebra, Shakesp^{ea}re
 (Malone's)
 Might have said sleep was murdered—new
 scholiasts have sent you pills
 To purge text of him ! Bread ? give me—Scotticè —
 scones !

VII

Think, what use, when youth's saddle galls bay's
 back or roan's,
 To seek chords on love's keys to strike, other than
 his chords ?
 There's an error joy winks at and grief half condones,
 Or life's counterpoint grates the C major of
 discords—
 'Tis man's choice 'twixt sluts rose-crowned and
 queens age dethrones.

VIII

I for instance might groan as a bag-pipe groans,
 Give the flesh of my heart for sharp sorrows to
 flagellate,
 Grief might grind my cheeks down, age make sticks
 of my bones,
 (Though a queen drowned in tears must be worth
 more than Madge elate)¹
 Rose might turn burdock, and pine-apples cones ;

¹ First edition —

And my face bear his brand—mine, that once bore Love's badge
 elate !

IX

My skin might change to a pitiful crone's,
My lips to a lizard's, my hair to weed,
My features, in fact, to a series of loans ;
Thus much is conceded ; now, you, concede
You would hardly salute me by choice, John Jones ?

THE POET AND THE WOODLOUSE

SAID a poet to a woodlouse—"Thou art certainly my
brother ;
I discern in thee the markings of the fingers of the
Whole ;
And I recognize, in spite of all the terrene smut and
smother,
In the colours shaded off thee, the suggestions of a
soul.

"Yea," the poet said, "I smell thee by some passive
divination,
I am satisfied with insight of the measure of thine
house ;
What had happened I conjecture, in a blank and
rhythmic passion,
Had the æons thought of making thee a man, and
me a louse.

"The broad lives of upper planets, their absorption
and digestion,
Food and famine, health and sickness, I can
scrutinize and test ;
Through a shiver of the senses comes a resonance of
question,
And by proof of balanced answer I decide that I am
best

"Man, the fleshly marvel, always feels a certain kind
of awe stick

To the skirts of contemplation, cramped with
nympholeptic weight :

Feels his faint sense charred and branded by the
touch of solar caustic,

On the forehead of his spirit feels the footprint of
'a Fate."

"Notwithstanding which, O poet," spake the wood-
louse, very blandly,

"I am likewise the created,—I the equipoise of
thee ;

I the particle, the atom, I behold on either hand
lie

The inane of measured ages that were embryos
of me.

"I am fed with intimations, I am clothed with conse-
quences,

And the air I breathe is coloured with apocalyptic
blush :

Ripest-budded odours blossom out of dim chaotic
stenches,

And the Soul plants spirit-lilies in sick leagues of
human slush.

"I am thrilled half cosmically through by crypto-
phantic surgings,

Till the rhythmic hills roar silent through a
spangious kind of blee .

And earth's soul yawns disembowelled of her pan-
creatic organs,

Like a madrepora if mesmerized, in rapt catalepsy

“ And I sacrifice, a Levite—and I palpitate, a poet ;—
 Can I close dead ears against the rush and resonance
 of things ?

Symbols in me breathe and flicker up the heights of
 the heroic ;

Earth's worst spawn, you said, and cursed me ?
 look ! approve me ! I have wings.

“ Ah, men's poets ! men's conventions crust you round
 and swathe you mist-like,

And the world's wheels grind your spirits down the
 dust ye overtrod :

We stand sinlessly stark-naked in effulgence of the
 Christlight,

And our polecat chokes not cherubs ; and our skunk
 smells sweet to God.

“ For He grasps the pale Created by some thousand
 vital handles,

Till a Godshine, bluey winnowed through the sieve
 of thunderstorms,

Shimmers up the non-existent round the churning feet
 of angels ;

And the atoms of that glory may be seraphs, being
 worms.

“ Friends, your nature underlies us and your pulses
 overlay us ;

Ye, with social sores unbandaged, can ye sing right
 and steer wrong ?

For the transient cosmic, rooted in imperishable chaos,
 Must be kneaded into drastics as material for a
 song.

“Eyes once purged from homebred vapours through
humanitarian passion
See that monochrome a despot through a democratic
prism ;
Hands that rip the soul up, reeking from divine evis-
ceration,
Not with priestlike oil anoint him, but a stronger-
smelling chrism.

“Pass, O poet, retransfigured ! God, the psychometric
rhapsode,
Fills with fiery rhythms the silence, stings the dark
with stars that blink ;
All eternities hang round him like an old man's clothes
collapsed,
While he makes his mundane music—AND HE WILL
NOT STOP, I THINK ”

THE PERSON OF THE HOUSE

IDYL CCCLXVI

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS

1. THE MONTHLY NURSE
2. THE CAUDLE
3. THE SENTENCES

THE KID

1. THE MONTHLY NURSE

THE sickly airs had died of damp ;
 Through huddling leaves the holy chime
 Flagged ; I, expecting Mrs. Gamp,
 Thought — “ Will the woman come in time ? ”
 Upstairs I knew the matron bed
 Held her whose name confirms all joy
 To me ; and tremblingly I said,
 “ Ah ! will it be a girl or boy ? ”
 And, soothed, my fluttering doubts began
 To sift the pleasantness of things ;
 Developing the unshapen man,
 An eagle baffled of his wings ;
 Considering, next, how fair the state
 And large the license that sublimes
 A nineteenth-century female fate—
 Sweet cause that thralls my liberal rhymes !

And Chastities and colder Shames,
 Decorums mute and marvellous,
 And fair Behaviour that reclaims
 All fancies grown erroneous,
 Moved round me musing, till my choice
 Faltered. A female in a wig
 Stood by me, and a drouthy voice
 'Announced her—Mrs. Betsy Prig.

2. THE CAUDLE

Sweet Love that sways the reeling years,
 The crown and chief of certitudes,
 For whose calm eyes and modest ears
 Time writes the rule and text of prudes—
 That, surpliced, stoops a nuptial head,
 Nor chooses to live blindly free,
 But, with all pulses quieted,
 Plays tunes of domesticity—
 That Love I sing of and have sung
 And mean to sing till Death yawn sheer,
 He rules the music of my tongue,
 Stills it or quickens, there or here.
 I say but this : as we went up
 I heard the Monthly give a sniff
 And “ *if* the big dog makes the pup—”
 She murmured—then repeated “ *if* !”
 The caudle on a slab was placed ;
 She snuffed it, snorting loud and long ;
 I fled—I would not stop to taste—
 And dreamed all night of things gone wrong.

3. THE SENTENCES

I

Abortive Love is half a sin ;
But Love's abortions dearer far
Than wheels without an axle-pin
Or life without a married star.

II

My rules are hard to understand
For him whom sensual rules depress ;
A bandbox in a midwife's hand
May hold a costlier bridal dress.

III

"I like her not ; in fact I loathe ;
Bugs hath she brought from London beds."
Friend ! wouldst thou rather bear their growth
Or have a baby with two heads ?

IDYL CCCLXVI

THE KID

My spirit, in the doorway's pause,
Fluttered with fancies in my breast ;
Obsequious to all decent laws,
I felt exceedingly distressed.
I knew it rude to enter there
With Mrs. V. in such a state ;
And, 'neath a magisterial air,
Felt actually indelicate.
I knew the nurse began to grin ;
I turned to greet my Love. Said she—
" Confound your modesty, come in !
—What shall we call the darling, V. ? "
(There are so many charming names !
Girls'—Peg, Moll, Doll, Fan, Kate, Blanche,
Bab :
Boys'—Mahershahal-hashbaz, James,
Luke, Nick, Dick, Mark, Aminadab.)

Lo, as the acorn to the oak,
As well-heads to the river's height,
As to the chicken the moist yolk,
As to high noon the day's first white—
Such is the baby to the man.
There, straddling one red arm and leg,
Lay my last work, in length a span,
Half hatched, and conscious of the egg.

A creditable child, I hoped ;
And half a score of joys to be
Through sunny lengths of prospect sloped
Smooth to the bland futurity.
O, fate surpassing other dooms,
O, hope above all wrecks of time !
O, light that fills all vanquished glooms,
O, silent song o'ermastering rhyme !
I covered either little foot,
I drew the strings about its waist ;
Pink as the unshell'd inner fruit,
But barely decent, hardly chaste,
Its nudity had startled me ;
But when the petticoats were on,
" I know," I said ; " its name shall be
Paul Cyril Athanasius John."
" Why," said my wife, " the child's a girl."
My brain swooned, sick with failing sense ;
With all perception in a whirl,
How could I tell the difference ?
" Nay," smiled the nurse, " the child's a boy."
And all my soul was soothed to hear
That so it was : then startled Joy
Mocked Sorrow with a doubtful tear.
And I was glad as one who sees
For sensual optics things unmeet :
As purity makes passion freeze,
So faith warns science off her beat.
Blessed are they that have not seen,
And yet, not seeing, have believed :
To walk by faith, as preached the Dean,
And not by sight, have I achieved.
Let love, that does not look, believe ;
Let knowledge, that believes not, look :

Truth pins her trust on falsehood's sleeve,
While reason blunders by the book.
Then Mrs. Prig addressed me thus ;
“ Sir, if you'll be advised by me,
You'll leave the blessed babe to us ;
It's my belief he wants his tea.”

LAST WORDS OF A SEVENTH- RATE POET

BILL, I feel far from quite right—if not further:
 already the pill
 Seems, if I may say so, to bubble inside me. A poet's
 heart, Bill,
 Is a sort of a thing that is made of the tenderest young
 bloom on a fruit.
 You may pass me the mixture at once, if you please—
 and I'll thank you to boot
 For that poem—and then for the julep. This really
 is damnable stuff!
 (Not the poem, of course.) Do you snivel, old
 friend? well, it's nasty enough,
 But I think I can stand it—I think so—ay, Bill, and
 I could were it worse.
 But I'll tell you a thing that I can't and I won't.
 'Tis the old, old curse—
 The gall of the gold-fruited Eden, the lure of the
 angels that fell.
 'Tis the core of the fruit snake-spotted in the hush of
 the shadows of hell,
 Where a lost man sits with his head drawn down,
 and a weight on his eyes.
 You know what I mean, Bill—the tender and delicate
 mother of lies,

Woman, the devil's first cousin—no doubt by the
 female side.
 The breath of her mouth still moves in my hair, and
 I know that she lied,
 And I feel her, Bill, sir, inside me—she operates there
 like a drug.
 Were it better to live like a beetle, to wear the cast
 ; clothes of a slug,
 Be the louse in the locks of the hangman, the mote
 in the eye of the bat,
 Than to live and believe in a woman, who must one
 • day grow aged and fat?
 You must see it's preposterous, Bill, sir. And yet,
 how the thought of it clings!
 I have lived out my time—I have priggled lots of
 verse—I have kissed (ah, that stings!)
 Lips that swore I had cribbed every line that I wrote
 on them—cribbed—honour bright!
 Then I loathed her; but now I forgive her; perhaps
 after all she was right.
 Yet I swear it was shameful—unwomanly, Bill, sir—
 to say that I fibbed.
 Why, the poems were mine, for I bought them in
 print. Cribbed? of course they were cribbed.
 Yet I wouldn't say, cribbed from the French—Lady
 Bathsheba thought it was vulgar—
 But picked up on the banks of the Don, from the lips
 of a highly intelligent Bulgar.
 I'm aware, Bill, that's out of all metre—I can't help
 it—I'm none of your sort
 Who set metres, by Jove, above morals—not exactly.
 They don't go to Court—
 As I mentioned one night to that cowslip-faced pet,
 Lady Rahab Redrabbet

(Whom the Marquis calls Drabby for short). Well,
I say, if you want a thing, grab it—
That's what I did, at least, when I took that *danseuse*
to a swell *cabaret*,
Where expense was no consideration. A poet, you
see, now and then must be gay.
(I declined to give more, I remember, than fifty
centeems to the waiter;
For I asked him if that was enough; and the
jackanapes answered—*Peut-être*.
Ah, it isn't in you to draw up a *menu* such as ours
was, though humble :
When I told Lady Shoreditch, she thought it a
regular *grand tout ensemble*.)
She danced the heart out of my body—I can see in
the glare of the lights,
I can see her again as I saw her that evening, in
spangles and tights.
When I spoke to her first, her eye flashed so,
I heard—as I fancied—the spark whiz
From her eyelid—I said so next day to that jealous
old fool of a Marquis.
She reminded me, Bill, of a lovely volcano, whose
entrails are lava—
Or (you know my *penchant* for original types) of the
upas in Java.
In the curve of her sensitive nose was a singular
species of dimple,
Where the flush was the mark of an angel's creased
kiss—if it wasn't a pimple.
Now I'm none of your bashful John Bulls who don't
know a pilau from a puggaree
Nor a chili, by George, from a chopstick. So, sir,
I marched into her snuggerly,

And proposed a light supper by way of a finish.
I treated her, Bill,
To six *entrées* of ortolans, sprats, maraschino, and
oysters. It made her quite ill.
Of which moment of sickness I took some advantage.
I held her like this,
And availed myself, sir, of her sneezing, to shut up
her lips with a kiss.
The waiters, I saw, were quite struck; and I felt,
I may say, *entre nous*,
Like Don Juan, Lauzun, Almaviva, Lord Byron, and
old Richelieu.
(You'll observe, Bill, that rhyme's quite Parisian; a
Londoner, sir, would have cited old Q.
People tell me the French in my verses recalls that
of Jeames or John Thomas · I
Must maintain it's as good as the average accent of
British diplomacy.)
These are moments that thrill the whole spirit with
spasms that excite and exalt.
I stood more than the peer of the great Casanova—
you know—de Seingalt.
She was worth, sir, I say it without hesitation, two
brace of her sisters.
Ah, why should all honey turn rhubarb—all cherries
grow onions—all kisses leave blisters?
Oh, and why should I ask myself questions? I've
heard such before—once or twice.
Ah, I can't understand it—but, O, I imagine it strikes
me as nice.
There's a deity shapes us our ends, sir, rough-hew
them, my boy, how we will—
As I stated myself in a poem I published last year,
you know, Bill—

Where I mentioned that that was the question—to be,
or, by Jove, not to be.

Ah, it's something—you'll think so hereafter—to wait
on a poet like me.

Had I written no more than those verses on "that
Countess I used to call Pussy—

Yes, Minette or Manon—and—you'll hardly believe
it—she said they were all out of Musset."

Now I don't say they weren't—but what then? and
I don't say they were—I'll bet pounds against
pennies on

The subject—I wish I may never die Laureate; if
some of them weren't out of Tennyson.

And I think—I don't like to be certain, with Death,
so to speak, by me, frowning—

But I think there were some—say a dozen, perhaps,
or a score—out of Browning.

And—though God knows his poems are not (as all
mine are, sir) perfumed with orris—

Or at least with patchouli—I wouldn't be sworn there
were none out of Morris.

And it's possible—only the legend of Circe is quite an
old yarn—old

As the hills—that I might have been thinking, perhaps,
of a poem by Arnold

When I sang how Ulysses—Odysseus I mean—would
have yearned to dishevel her

Bright hair with his kisses, and painted myself at her
feet—a Strayed Reveller.

As for poets who go on a contrary tack to what I go
and you go—

You remember my lyrics *translated*—like "sweet
bully Bottom"—from Hugo?

Though I will say it's curious that simply on just
that account there should be

Men so bold as to say that not one of my poems was
written by me.

It would stir the political bile or the physical spleen
of a drab or a Tory

To hear critics disputing my claim to Empedocles,
Maud, and the Laboratory.

Yes, it's singular—nay, I can't think of a parallel
(ain't it a high lark?

As that Countess would say)—there are few men
believe it was I wrote the Ode to a Skylark.

And it often has given myself and Lord Albert no end
of diversion

To hear fellows maintain to my face it was Words-
worth who wrote the Excursion,

When they know that whole reams of the verses
recur in my authorized works

Here and there, up and down! Why, such readers
are infidels—heretics—Turks.

And the pitiful critics who think in their paltry pre-
sumption to pay me a

Pretty compliment, pairing me off, sir, with Keats—
as if *he* could write *Lamia*!

While I never produced a more characteristic and
exquisite book,

One that gave me more real satisfaction, than did, on
the whole, *Lalla Rookh*.

Was it there that I called on all debtors, being
pestered myself by a creditor, (he

Isn't paid yet) to rise, by the proud appellation of
bondsmen—hereditary?

Yes—I think so. And yet, on my word, I can't think
why I think it was so.

It more probably was in the poem I made a few seasons
ago
On that Duchess—her name now? ah, thus one out-
lives a whole cycle of joys!
Fair supplants black and brown succeeds golden.
The poem made rather a noise.
And indeed I have seen worse verses; but as for the
woman, my friend—
Though his neck had been never so stiff, she'd have
made a philosopher bend.
As the broken heart of a sunset that bleeds pure
purple and gold
In the shudder and swoon of the sickness of colour,
the agonies old
That engirdle the brows of the day when he sinks
with a spasm into rest
And the splash of his kingly blood is dashed on the
skirts of the west,
Even such was my own, when I felt how much sharper
than any snake's tooth
Was the passion that made me mistake Lady Eve for
her niece Lady Ruth.
The whole world, colourless, lapsed. Earth fled from
my feet like a dream,
And the whirl of the walls of Space was about me,
and moved as a stream
Flowing and ebbing and flowing all night to a weary
tune
("Such as that of my verses"? Get out!) in the
face of a sick-souled moon.
The keen stars kindled and faded and fled, and the
wind in my ears
Was the wail of a poet for failure—you needn't come
snivelling tears

And spoiling the mixture, confound you, with dropping
your tears into that !

I know I'm pathetic—I must be—and you soft-
hearted and fat,

And I'm grateful of course for your kindness—there,
don't come hugging me, now—

But because a fellow's pathetic, you needn't low like
: a cōw.

I should like—on my soul, I should like—to re-
member—but somehow I can't—

If the lady whose love has reduced me to this was
the niece or the aunt.

But whichever it was, I feel sure, when I published
my lays of last year

(You remember their title—The Tramp—only seven-
and-sixpence—not dear),

I sent her a copy (perhaps her tears fell on the title-
page—yes—

I should like to imagine she wept)—and the Bride of
Bulgaria (MS.)

I forwarded with it. The lyrics, no doubt, she found
bitter—and sweet ;

But the Bride she rejected, you know, with expressions
I will not repeat.

Well—she did no more than all publishers did.
Though my prospects were marred,

I can pity and pardon them. Blindness, mere blind-
ness ! And yet it was hard.

For a poet, Bill, is a blossom—a bird—a billow—a
breeze—

A kind of creature that moves among men as a wind
among trees.

And a bard who is also the pet of patricians and
dowagers doubly can
Express his contempt for canaille in his fables where
beasts are republican.
Yet with all my disdainful forgiveness for men so
deficient in *ton*
I cannot but feel it was cruel—I cannot but think it
was wrong.
I with the heat of my heart still burning against all
bars
As the fire of the dawn, so to speak, in the blanched
blank brows of the stars—
I with my tremulous lips made pale by musical
breath—
I with the shade in my eyes that was left by the kisses
of Death—
(For Death came near me in youth, and touched my
face with his face,
And put in my lips the songs that belong to a desolate
place—
Desolate truly, my heart and my lips, till her kiss
filled them up !)
I with my soul like wine poured out with my flesh for
the cup—
It was hard for me—it was hard—Bill, Bill, you great
owl, was it not ?
For the day creeps in like a Fate : and I think my
grand passion is rot :
And I dreamily seem to perceive, by the light of a
life's dream done,
The lotion at six, and the mixture at ten, and the
draught before one.

Yes—I feel rather better. Man's life is a mull, at
the best ;
And the patent perturbator pills are like bullets of
lead in my chest.
When a man's whole spirit is like the lost Pleiad, a
blown-out star,
Is there comfort in Holloway, Bill ? is there hope of
salvation in Parr ?
True, most things work to their end—and an end
that the shroud overlaps.
Under lace, under silk, under gold, sir, the skirt of
a winding-sheet flaps—
Which explains, if you think of it, Bill, why I can't,
though my soul thereon broodeth,
Quite make out if I loved Lady Tamar as much as
I loved Lady Judith.
Yet her dress was of violet velvet, her hair was
hyacinth-hued,
And her ankles—no matter. A face where the music
of every mood
Was touched by the tremulous fingers of passionate
feeling, and made
Strange melodies, scornful, but sweeter than strings
whereon sorrow has played
To enrapture the hearing of mirth when his garland
of blossom and green
Turns to lead on the anguished forehead—"you don't
understand what I mean" ?
Well, of course I knew you were stupid—you always
were stupid at school—
Now don't say you weren't—but I'm hanged if I
thought you were quite such a fool !
You don't see the point of all this ? I was talking of
sickness and death—

In that poem I made years ago, I said this—" Love,
the flower-time whose breath
Smells sweet through a summer of kisses and
perfumes an autumn of tears
Is sadder at root than a winter—its hopes heavy-
hearted like fears.
Though I love your Grace more than I love little
Letty, the maid of the mill,
Yet the heat of your lips when I kiss them " (you see
we were intimate, Bill)
" And the beat of the delicate blood in your eyelids
of azure and white
Leave the taste of the grave in my mouth and the
shadow of death on my sight.
Fill the cup—twine the chaplet—come into the garden
—get out of the house—
Drink to *me* with your eyes—there's a banquet behind,
where worms only carouse !
As I said to sweet Katie, who lived by the brook on
the land Philip farmed—
Worms shall graze where my kisses found pasture !"
The Duchess, I may say, was charmed.
It was read to the Duke, and he cried like a child.
If you'll give me a pill,
I'll go on till past midnight. That poem was said to
be—Somebody's, Bill.
But you see you can always be sure of my hand as
the mother that bore me
By the fact that I never write verse which has never
been written before me.
Other poets—I blush for them, Bill—may adore and
repudiate in turn a
Libitina, perhaps, or Pandemos ; my Venus, you
know, is Laverna.

Nay, that epic of mine which begins from foundations
the Bible is built on—

“Of man’s *first* disobedience”—I’ve heard it attributed,
dammy, to Milton.

Well, it’s lucky for them that it’s not worth my while,
as I may say, to break spears

With the hirelings, forsooth, of the press who assert
that Othello was Shakespeare’s.

When he that can run, sir, may read—if he borrows
the book, or goes on tick—

In my poems the bit that describes how the Hellespont
joins the Propontic.

There are men, I believe, who will tell you that Gray
wrote the whole of The Bard—

Or that I didn’t write half the Elegy, Bill, in a
Country Churchyard.

When you know that my poem, The Poet, begins—
“Ruin seize thee!” and ends

With recapitulations of horrors the poet invokes on
his friends.

And I’ll swear, if you look at the dirge on my relatives
under the turf, you

Will perceive it winds up with some lines on myself—
and begins with the curfew.

Now you’ll grant it’s more probable, Bill—as a man
of the world, if you please—

That all these should have prigg’d from myself than
that I should have prigg’d from all these.

I could cry when I think of it, friend, if such tears
would comport with my dignity,

That the author of Christabel ever should smart from
such vulgar malignity.

(You remember perhaps that was one of the first little
things that I carolled

After finishing Marmion, the Princess, the Song of the Shirt, and Childe Harold.)

Oh, doubtless it always has been so—Ah, doubtless it always will be—

There are men who would say that myself is a different person from me.

Better the porridge of patience a poor man snuffs in his plate

Than the water of poisonous laurels distilled by the fingers of hate.

'Tis a dark-purple sort of a moonlighted kind of a midnight, I know ;

You remember those verses I wrote on Irene, from Edgar A. Poe?

It was Lady Aholibah Levison, daughter of old Lord St. Giles,

Who inspired those delectable strains, and rewarded her bard with her smiles.

There are tasters who've sipped of Castalia, who don't look on *my* brew as *the* brew :

There are fools who can't think why the names of my heroines of title should always be Hebrew.

'Twas my comrade, Sir Alister Knox, said, "Noo, dinna ye fash wi' Apollo, mon ;

Gang to Jewry for wives and for concubines, lad—look at David and Solomon.

And it gives an erotico-scriptural twang," said that high-born young man, "—tickles

The lug" (he meant ear) "of the reader—to throw in a touch of the Canticles."

So I versified half of The Preacher—it took me a week, working slowly. Bah !

You don't half know the sex, Bill—they like it. And
what if her name was Aholibah?

I recited her charms, in conjunction with those of a
girl at the *café*,

In a poem I published in collaboration with Templeton
(Taffy).

There are prudes in a world full of envy—and some
of them thought it too strong

To compare an earl's daughter by name with a girl
at a French *restaurant*.

I regarded her, though, with the chivalrous eyes of
a knight-errant on quest;

I may say I don't know that I ever felt prouder, old
friend, of a conquest.

And when I've been made happy, I never have cared
a brass farthing who knew it; I

Thank my stars I'm as free from mock-modesty,
friend, as from vulgar fatuity.

I can't say if my spirit retains—for the subject appears
to me misty—any tie

To such associations as Poesy weaves round the
records of Christianity.

There are bards—I may be one myself—who delight
in their skill to unlock a lip's

Rosy secrets by kisses and whispers of texts from the
charming Apocalypse.

It was thus that I won, by such biblical pills of
poetical manna,

From two elders—Sir Seth and Lord Isaac—the liking
of Lady Susanna.

But I left her—a woman to me is no more than a
match, sir, at tennis is—

When I heard she'd gone off with my valet, and
burnt my rhymed version of Genesis.

You may see by my shortness of speech that my
 time's almost up : I perceive
 That my new-fangled brevity strikes you : but don't
 —though the public will—grieve.
 As it's sometimes my whim to be vulgar, it's some-
 times my whim to be brief ;
 As when once I observed, after Heine, that “ she was
 a harlot, and I ” (which is true) “ was a thief.”
 (Though you hardly should cite this particular line,
 by the way, as an instance of absolute brevity :
 I'm aware, man, of that ; so you needn't disgrace
 yourself, sir, by such grossly mistimed and
 impertinent levity.)
 I don't like to break off, any more than you wish me
 to stop : but my fate is
 Not to vent half a million such rhymes without block-
 heads exclaiming—

JAM SATIS.

Specimen from the speaker's original poems.

Come into the orchard, Anne,
 For the dark owl, Night, has fled,
 And Phosphor slumbers, as well as he can
 With a daffodil sky for a bed :
 And the musk of the roses perplexes a man,
 And the pimpernel muddles his head.

SONNET FOR A PICTURE

THAT nose is out of drawing. With a gasp,
 She pants upon the passionate lips that ache
 With the red drain of her own mouth, and make
 A monochord of colour. Like an asp,
 One lithe lock wriggles in his rutilant grasp.
 Her bosom is an oven of myrrh, to bake
 Love's white warm shewbread to a browner cake.
 The lock his fingers clench has burst its hasp.
 The legs are absolutely abominable.
 Ah ! what keen overgust of wild-eyed woes
 Flashes in that bosom, flushes in that nose ?
 Nay ! Death sets riddles for desire to spell,
 Responsive. What red hem earth's passion sews,
 But may be ravenously unripped in hell ?

NEPHELIDIA

FROM the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn
 through a notable nimbus of nebulous noonshine,
 Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-flower that
 flickers with fear of the flies as they float,
 Are they looks of our lovers that lustrously lean from
 a marvel of mystic miraculous moonshine,
 These that we feel in the blood of our blushes that
 thicken and threaten with throbs through the
 throat ?
 Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at appeal of
 an actor's appalled agitation,
 Fainter with fear of the fires of the future than pale
 with the promise of pride in the past ;
 Flushed with the famishing fullness of fever that
 reddens with radiance of rather recreation,
 Gaunt as the ghastliest of glimpses that gleam
 through the gloom of the gloaming when ghosts
 go aghast ?
 Nay, for the nick of the tick of the time is a tremulous
 touch on the temples of terror,
 Strained as the sinews yet strenuous with strife of
 the dead who is dumb as the dust-heaps of death :
 Surely no soul is it, sweet as the spasm of erotic emo-
 tional exquisite error,
 Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss, beatific itself
 by beatitude's breath.

Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that was soft to the
spirit and soul of our senses

Sweetens the stress of suspiring suspicion that sobs
in the semblance and sound of a sigh ;

Only this oracle opens Olympian, in mystical moods
and triangular tenses—

“ Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is dark
till the dawn of the day when we die.”

Mild is the murk and monotonous music of memory,
melodiously mute as it may be,

While the hope in the heart of a hero is bruised by
the breach of men's rapiers, resigned to the rod ;
Made meek as a mother whose bosom-beats bound
with the bliss-bringing bulk of a balm-breathing
baby,

As they grope through the grave-yard of creeds,
under skies growing green at a groan for the
grimness of God.

Blank is the book of his bounty beholden of old, and
its binding is blacker than bluer :

Out of blue into black is the scheme of the skies,
and their dewes are the wine of the bloodshed of
things ;

Till the darkling desire of delight shall be free as a
rawn that is freed from the fangs that pursue her,
Till the heart-beats of hell shall be hushed by a
hymn from the hunt that has harried the kennel
of kings.